Existential Prisons

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Captivity in Mid-Twentieth-Century French Literature

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Dedication:
To my father,
Walter Frederick Frese,
for whom captivity
meant commitment.

Contents

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Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used for source citations in the text. Except where indicated, translations from these sources and other works in a foreign language are my own.

Malraux's Works

C *Les Conquérants* (Paris: Club des libraires de France, 1959).
CH *La Condition humaine* (Paris: Gallimard, 1946).
E *L'Espoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1937).
NA *Les Noyers d'Altenburg* (Paris: Gallimard, 1948).
TM *Le Temps du mépris* (Paris: Gallimard, 1935).
VR *La Voie royale* (Paris: Grasset, 1952).

Camus's Works

AP *L'Artiste en prison*, in *Essais*, ed. Roger Quillot and L. Faucon (Paris: Gallimard, Editions de la Pléiade, 1965).
C1 *Carnets mai 1935–février 1942* (Paris: Gallimard, 1962).
C2 *Carnets janvier 1942–mars 1951* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964).
Ch *La Chute*, in *Théâtre, récits, nouvelles*, ed. Roger Quilliot (Paris: Gallimard, Editions de la Pléiade, 1962).
E *L'Etranger*, in *Théâtre, récits, nouvelles.*
HR *L'Homme révolté*, in *Essais.*
M *Le Malentendu*, in *Théâtre, récits, nouvelles.*
P *La Peste*, in *Théâtre, récits, nouvelles.*
Rn *Requiem pour une nonne*, adaptation of William Faulkner's *Requiem for a Nun*, in *Théâtre, récits, nouvelles.*
S *Le Mythe de Sisyphe*, in *Essais.*

Translations of Camus's Works

F *The Fall*, trans. Justin O'Brien (New York: Knopf, 1966).

Pg *The Plague*, trans. Stuart Gilbert (New York: Modern Library, 1948).

St *The Stranger*, trans. Stuart Gilbert (New York: Knopf, 1970).

Sartre's Works

AR *L'Age de raison* (Paris: Gallimard "Folio," 1978).

Cr *Critique de la raison dialectique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1960).

DA *Drôle d'amitié*, in *Oeuvres romanesques*, ed. Contat and Rybalka (Paris: Gallimard, 1981), pp. 1461–1534.

DC *La Dernière Chance* (fragments), in *Oeuvres romanesques*, pp. 1585–1654.

EN *L'Etre et le néant* (Paris: Gallimard, 1943).

HC *Huis clos* in *Théâtre* (Paris: Gallimard, 1947).

M *Le Mur* (Paris: Gallimard "Folio," 1978).

MA *La Mort dans l'âme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969).

N *La Nausée* (Paris: Gallimard, 1977).

SA *Les Séquestrés d'Altona* (Paris: Gallimard, 1960).

Su *Le Sursis* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945).

Genet's Works

B *Les Bonnes*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 4.

Ba *Le Balcon*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 4.

HS *Haute Surveillance*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 4.

J *Journal d'un voleur* (Paris: Gallimard, 1963).

M *Miracle de la rose*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 2.

N *Les Nègres* (Lyon: Marc Barbezat l'Arbalete, 1963).

ND *Notre Dame des Fleurs*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 2.

OC *Oeuvres complètes de Jean Genet* (Paris: Gallimard, 1952–). Other works not cited specifically in this list are referred to as *OC* plus volume number.

P *Les Paravents*, *in Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 2.

PF *Pompes Funèbres*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 3.

Po *Poèmes* (Lyon: L'Arbalete, 1947).

Q *Querelle de Brest*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 3

Introduction

The deprivation of liberty, the sequestration of the human body in a cell within a self-contained community shut away from the normal activities of life has become, as Michel Foucault has shown, the unique mode of punishment for criminals, political deviants, and other undesirables: the means by which modern societies attempt to control their subjects and assert their power. The proliferation of closed worlds in our social structure in the modern era—cities, schools, factories, hospitals, psychiatric establishments, and especially vast prison complexes—has contributed to a preoccupation with space, particularly the nature of space that encloses.

The most extreme expression of the relationship between power and enclosure has been the growth of political prisons and concentration camps in the years preceding World War II, culminating in what we have loosely termed the Holocaust but continuing, as Solzhenitsyn reminds us, into the present. The study of the effects of the concentration camp on survivor and bystander, on Jew and non-Jew, on political and apolitical deportees continues to furnish sources for scholarly and imaginative writing and to perplex the mind. The question of the capacity of literature, or any art form, to deal adequately either with the world of the concentration camps or with the entire phenomenon of the Holocaust has been particularly controversial. T. W. Adorno, citing the gulf between the formalistic conventions of art and the chaos of the camp, concluded that it was "barbaric" to write poetry after Auschwitz.[1] George Steiner, asking the question "What poetry after Auschwitz?" asserted that it was immoral for a poet to appropriate images from the concentration camp experience for his or her personal ends.[2] A. Alvarez, on the other hand, contended that while

the literary attempts of survivors or realistic accounts had on the whole produced works that failed to transcend a documentary interest, the "destructive nihilism" of the Holocaust could be sensed better in the writing of a Samuel Beckett.[3] More recent studies, examining in greater detail the large body of documentary and imaginative literature dealing with the Holocaust, testify to the possibility and indeed the necessity of literature's struggle to express the unthinkable.[4]

Despite their historical uniqueness, the concentration camps of World War II are also part of a continuum in the human mind's consciousness of imprisoning space and of forces that imprison. Much of modern European language and literature has reflected a mode of consciousness modified by the camp phenomenon as well as by other imprisonments of war while not bearing the direct testimonial influence of Holocaust literature. A literature whose preoccupation with confinement has at least some of its roots in the midcentury proliferation of prisons and in the revelation of the camps is perhaps most evident in modern France.

France, whose writers remained active (and in some cases were formed) during the German Occupation and at the time of massive internments and deportations, produced a particularly intense relationship between poets and prisons. There exists an extensive body of writing—reports (*témoignages*), autobiographical novels, other fictions, poetry—that is a direct product of the authors' experiences of war prisons, concentration camps, or the Occupation. The first chapter of this book will survey some of this literature with the intention of showing the major concerns of these writers in their attempts to transform a particular experience of confinement into language. Of primary interest here, however, is the representation of the phenomenon of imprisonment in works by four major French writers who may be grouped loosely in the "existentialist" generation: Malraux, Camus, Sartre, and Genet. While Genet's personal experience of prisons is obviously of a different order from that of the other three, the use of closed collective and cellular spaces and thematics resembling those of the more circumstantial prison and concentration camp literature reveals structural similarities and common midcentury preoccupations. These literary prisons, in order to be defined more precisely, must be seen in the light of three other phenomena: (1) the tradition of prisons and related images in Western literature, (2) a

tendency in modern literature to favor representations of enclosure and, more generally, spatiality over temporality, and (3) the critical methodologies for dealing with the problem of the representation of space in literature.

The symbolic value of prisons and other enclosures as literary figures can be traced back to their use in religious ceremony and ritual: their value as archetypes. In Vedic and Buddhist literature as in Platonism (from Pythagoras), the body is figured as the prison of the soul and earthly life as a vast prison from which human beings aspire to liberate themselves. Initiatory rituals in Taoist, Hindu, and Buddhist traditions make use of a sacred cabin or a sacred cave in the process of spiritual transformation.[5] While the sacred enclosure becomes both womb and tomb during the time when the initiate is confined and undergoing a process of ritual death and rebirth, it may at the same time represent the recreation of the cosmos. The cessation of normal time as it appears to the initiate within the sealed cave imitates the circular time of eternity.[6] Confinement thus paradoxically entails a liberation from the bondage of life as it is limited by time in the world. Foucault is aware of the archetypal value of the modern solitary prison cell: "Dans cette cellule fermée, sépulchre provisoire, les mythes de la résurrection prennent corps facilement" (In the closed cell, a temporary tomb, myths of resurrection take form easily).[7]

Psychoanalytic theory corroborates mythological or religious values of enclosure. For Freud, the need to enclose oneself is indicative of the desire to return to the womb. Jung speaks of a "regressive restoration of the persona" in which isolation and enclosure not only imitate reentry to the womb but also give access to a repressed self and the collective unconscious. The ensuing state of introversion may mean either a kind of living death or, in the case of a return to the active life, a rebirth. In the latter case, "this journey to the underworld has been a fountain of youth, and new fertility springs from . . . apparent death."[8] Jungian critics like Maud Bodkin have interpreted literary journeys to the underworld in this sense. Virgil's Hades and Dante's hell appear as both vast prisons of souls and as places of spiritual renewal, as both death and rebirth, for the visitor.[9]

Western literature abounds with representations of collective prisons, earthly and unearthly, and of individual cells, rooms, and caves whose function as decor is both dramatic and symbolic.

Prisons of force, where the prisoners are deprived of their liberty by an outside power, they also may appear as voluntary, beneficial enclosures. Often the two converge, so that the walls separating the prisoner from normal life are instrumental in bringing about his salvation; the deprivation of physical liberty opens the way to a spiritual freedom. Enclosure in its literary forms, as in ritual and psychology, means anxiety and isolation but also may mean protection and restoration.

Along with the topographical representations of prisons and other enclosures in Western literature runs a tradition of metaphors using terms such as "prison" or "cage." Like the prison-decor, the prison-figure may be either individual or collective: its prototypes, to be found in Plato, are the prison of the body and the prison of the world. In *The Republic*, the concept of this world as a place where human beings are confined by their ignorance of the nature of reality unfolds into the famous allegory of the cave. Prison as figure and as setting may reinforce one another as they do in the *Phaedo* where the incarcerated Socrates demonstrates that the soul is imprisoned in the body and that because of our lack of pure knowledge we live within a prison-house. As it is through consciousness of its state of confinement in the body that the soul may aspire to liberty, it is through the acceptance of adversity that the philosopher learns to die freely.

Centuries later Boethius, in the bareness of his prison cell, turns his mind from earthly pleasures to Lady Philosophy who teaches him that earth itself is a narrow enclosure (*angustissima area*), that the human mind can free itself from its earthly prison by lofty thoughts, and that the soul is captive when in the body but free when contemplating divine intelligence. When Boethius, in apparent reference to his own condition, asks the lady why good and just men are put in prison, she replies that adversity develops virtue. Since the world and the pleasures of the body are prisons, it follows that those cut off from them have a better chance of acquiring freedom. Lady Philosophy arrives at the paradox that souls in bodies free in the world are "prisoners of their own liberty" (*propria libertate captivae*).[10]

In between Plato and Boethius lie the neo-Platonic, Stoic, and early Christian traditions of figures that portray the body as the prison (or the cage) of the soul and the world as the collective prison of humanity.[11] Although the notion of the body as

prison seems to contradict the Christian doctrine of the Resurrection and was, in fact, at one point condemned as heretical by Augustine and Jerome, the neo-Platonic prison-body and prison-world greatly influenced the Christian tradition. Ambrose and Origen see the incarceration of the soul as a punishment, a result of the Fall, thus distorting Plato, for whom the prison-body was (in Pierre Courcelle's reading) merely a place of surveillance. Whereas for Platonists, imprisonment is primarily a result of man's metaphysical ignorance, for the Christian it is the outcome of his bondage to sin and death. The most explicit early Christian statement on the world as prison is given by John Chrysostomus who, long before Pascal, visualized the human condition as the state of prisoners linked to each other by the same chain.[12] Tertullian, who seems to have adopted both Platonic notions, the prison-body and the prison-world, states more explicitly than either Plato or Boethius the paradoxical notion that the real prison is a place of liberation from the prison-world. He writes to the incarcerated martyrs, "For if we consider the world to be more a prison, then we will recognize that you have left the prison rather than entered it. . . . Just as the Christian outside the prison has renounced the world, so in prison, he has renounced the prison. . . . Although the body is shut in and the flesh detained, all things are open to the spirit."[13]

The idea of cloistering as a means of freeing the soul from the prison-body and a small community of Christians from the prison-world becomes institutionalized with the idea of monasticism. Carthusians value the monastic cell as the instrument of liberation and the location of true happiness. A whole monastic literature in praise of the cell flourishes from the twelfth century, culminating in Thomas à Kempis' elegy to the sweetness of prolonged enclosure (*cella continuata*) in *The Imitation of Christ*.[14] Bodily deprivations or even mutilations suffered in the cell are perceived as instrumental in liberating the soul from bondage in the body. Similarly, the community of the cloister serves as an antidote to bondage in the world.

Even while praising the benefits of cell and cloister, medieval people were aware of their similarity to prisons. Confinement is not entirely a voluntary matter in the communities run by strict monastic rule. *Chartreuse* could be confused with *carcer* (prison). Control from outside is necessary to contain the passions; because

of the benefit to the soul the monastic prison becomes a happy place. Peter the Venerable, writing to Heloise after Abelard's death, wishes that he could see her "confined in the delightful prison of Marcigny with the other handmaids of Christ who are there awaiting their freedom in heaven."[15] The theme of the "delightful prison" (*jocundus carcer*) affects literature and thought well beyond monasticism. Four centuries later Thomas More, incarcerated in the Tower of London, attempts to console himself by reversing the comparison, finding in his imprisonment the benefits of the cloister. Although such consolation is not easy for one who preferred the active life, More's reasoning leads him to amplify the image of the prison-world (we are under sentence of death and God is our chief jailer), to view a stay in a real jail as merely a shortened form of this state, to remember that Christ was a prisoner for our liberation, and to conclude that enduring the "short prisonment" for his sake might "win us everlasting liberty."[16]

The Renaissance saw the flourishing of a quite different use of the prison as literary figure but one that also originated in neo-Platonism: the prison of love. The prison setting functions as allegory in Diego de San Pedro's influential *El Carcél de Amor* (*The Prison of Love*), where the hero, imprisoned by Desire, awaits the only thing that can free him, his lady's return of his love. A whole allegorical erotic vocabulary built around the idea of a bittersweet imprisonment in the "chains" and other forms of captivity of love can be found in Petrarch and his followers. In Marguerite de Navarre's *Les Prisons*, the allegorical prisons are three: love, ambition, and study. Marguerite joins the theme of the love-prison to the Christian prison-world by showing how the narrator, working his way through the captivities of earthly delights, finally frees himself by finding God.

The prison as rhetorical figure acquires a new and distinctively modern shading in the works of Pascal. In equating the human condition with the lot of criminals waiting to be executed or with a solitary man in a cell (*cachot*), Pascal amplifies both the Christian tradition of man's bondage in sin and mortality and the Platonic one of his metaphysical ignorance. If the figures themselves are steeped in tradition, the resonance of terror, the fresh, frightening consciousness of exile from the kingdom of God, is new. Also new is the idea that it is through the awareness of his

imprisonment that man will be saved. These qualities, as well as the profound dialectical tensions in Pascal's prison imagery are all pointed out by Victor Brombert in *The Romantic Prison*. Along with the celebrated *pensée* on the human condition as a group of men in chains awaiting their execution, another text cited by Brombert is particularly illustrative.

> Thus we must consider ourselves as criminals in a prison filled with images of their liberator and with the necessary instructions for coming out of bondage. But it must be admitted that one cannot perceive these holy characters without supernatural light. For as all things speak of God to those who know Him, and reveal Him to all those who love Him, so these same things hide Him to those who do not know Him.[17]

The place of punishment is potentially the place of salvation. Those who recognize this life as a prison will be better able to receive divine grace, to decipher the images on the wall, to be saved. Instrument of punishment and suffering, the prison is also an instrument of liberation. The same tension is present in the Pascalian concept of *divertissement*. If one instinct pushes human beings toward outside activities and distraction, another, remaining from their condition before the Fall, reminds them that true happiness is in the state of rest, the ability to remain in a room alone. "Tout le malheur des hommes vient d'une seule chose, qui est de savoir demeurer en repos, dans une chambre." Pascal pushes the paradoxical relationship between captivity in the world and freedom through confinement a step beyond. The metaphor of the captive soul and the vision of the redemptive cell become fused in Pascal's vivid language, leading his readers to accept the Jansenist affirmation that we must rejoice in our captive state because only through knowledge of it will we be prepared to receive liberating grace.

Pascal's version of the prison metaphor represents a state of perfect equilibrium that disintegrates with the end of the neoclassical era. When his vision is revived by the existentialist generation, most notably by Malraux, the consciousness of imprisonment as a terrifying revelation of the human condition remains, but the indications to paths of salvation, more diffuse, do not balance it.

In the wake of Pascal's age the great penal institutions,

modeled, as Foucault would have it, on Bentham's *Panopticon,* begin to dot the landscape of the West. Coincident with the growth of prisons is the growth of the idea of prison reform, as in Beccaria's *Dei Delitti e delle pene* (*Of Crimes and Punishments*), and the consequent view of imprisonment as a necessary social evil rather than man's inevitable lot. Voltaire dismissed Pascal's image of the human condition as the idea of a fanatic. Convents and monasteries, as Diderot's nun would testify, were for those who espoused the values of the Enlightenment deeply inimical to "natural" human life. Pope depicts a Heloise frustrated in "deep solitudes and awful cells" rather than in a delightful prison. In *Moll Flanders,* Newgate prison stands as a symbol of hell on earth. Yet the myths associated with the happy prison do not disappear in the eighteenth century. Moll may descend into hell but she also emerges "reborn."[18]

The ominous political prisons, the Bastille and Spielberg, symbols of tyranny, of a secular hell, and then of human abilities to resist them, spawn a mythology and a literature of their own. The romantics, as Brombert's *Romantic Prison* demonstrates admirably, while developing the symbol of the prison as the arm of social and political oppression, also revived in their own fashion the paradox of the liberating, happy prison. The liberal or revolutionary behind bars appealed to the romantic sensibility partly because of the contrast between external oppression and the internal flame of freedom. Schiller's *Don Carlos,* Goethe's *Egmont,* Poe's *Pit and the Pendulum,* Beethoven's *Fidelio* testify to the popularity of the Spanish Inquisition as a setting for this theme. Byron's Bonnivard best states the case for the flourishing of liberty in prison: "Eternal spirit of the chainless mind! / Brightest in dungeons, Liberty! thou art, / For there thy habitation is the heart." The freedom here is not one of monastic spiritual inwardness but one of individualistic moral resistance. Related to the theme of tyrannical oppression of the freedom fighter is that of philistine society's persecution of the poet, artist, or genius. The freedom that flourishes there takes the form of dreams, or poetry, or perhaps madness. Thus Baudelaire's vision of Delacroix's painting of Tasso in prison: "Ame aux songes obscurs, / Que le Réel étouffe entre ses quatre murs!" (Soul of dark dreams / that Reality suffocates in its four walls). The romantics also adopt the monastic or Pascalian cell of spiritual contemplation and prelude to sal-

vation for their own purposes. The *carbonaro* Silvio Pellico could write in his celebrated account of ten years' captivity by the Austrians in Spielberg and his consequent religious conversion, "Benedico la prigione" (I bless the prison). Stendhal, who admired *Le Mie Prigioni* (*My Prisons*), secularized the monastic theme in *La Chartreuse de Parme* (*The Charterhouse of Parma*), adding to it another favorite romantic motif, the happy prison of love, *à deux*. Late nineteenth-century writers developed their own variations on the theme of mystical redemption through confinement as in Oscar Wilde's account of his rebirth in Reading Gaol.

Nineteenth-century literature also produced great scenes of collective prisons, as in Hugo's novels and Dostoyevski's *House of the Dead*. Twentieth-century writers—Arthur Koestler and André Malraux are examples—have taken up the theme of the collective prison as the breeding ground of human solidarity, most often a political solidarity directed against a common oppressor. Two world wars and the resultant awakening of political consciousness on the part of twentieth-century writers have no doubt contributed to the importance given to the literary theme of collective imprisonment and solidarity. However, is it true that, as Brombert maintains, this development caused the romantic, individual, and salutary cell to remain only as an ironic anachronism? It seems rather to continue to permeate twentieth-century literature, if in a distorted guise. Kafka's protagonists, while undergoing a reign of absurd terror prefiguring that of the concentration camps, experience sublime moments in closed places, moments that *almost* reveal to them truth, happiness, love.[19] The "happy" cell, the cell of introspection and rebirth, may appear as a counterpoint to representations of collective terror and collective solidarity. Writings by political prisoners, and even some by concentration camp internees, fix on the theme of inner liberation within oppression. The Gulag odyssey of Solzhenitsyn begins in the "first cell, first love," with a "birth . . . of free-floating thoughts."[20] Is it possible that literary tradition, in some instances, is a stronger influence than reality? The prisoner-protagonists of Koestler and Malraux undergo mystical, if unorthodox, experiences during their confinement, experiences that contrast rather sharply with the "official" lesson of solidarity through resistance that their books uphold. We will return to this question in the following chapters.

The representation of imprisonment in the twentieth century

must be seen as part of a more general trend in modern novels and dramas to be set in closed spaces and, more generally still, to give priority to spatial representations over temporal ones. In the Château de Guermantes, remarks Proust in *Against Sainte-Beuve*, time takes on the form of space.[21] Proust, who reacted against the "diachronic tyranny of the 19th century" both as a novelist and critic, was one of the initiators of the novel whose quests and adventures are inner ones, and of a form where past, present, and future, superimposed rather than cumulative, become spatialized. It is no coincidence that the search for lost time (also, as Georges Poulet points out, very much a search for lost spaces) emanates from a closed room. The search for the self, a strong theme in twentieth-century fiction, tends to take place in inward rather than in outward movement, in restriction rather than adventure. More confident characters in the great realist novels dominate the spaces they occupy; their modern counterparts seem to be overpowered or defined by their surrounding spaces.

The predominant enclosed decor, or the valorization of inward space over outward movement is a constant in literature written by women. Nineteenth-century women writers, as Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar have brilliantly argued, "penned in" by the male text and "penned up" in the male house, have a special relationship to the representation of confinement. "From Ann Radcliffe's melodramatic dungeons to Jane Austen's mirrored parlors, from Charlotte Brontë's haunted garrets to Emily Brontë's coffin-shaped beds, imagery of enclosure reflects the woman writer's own discomfort, her sense of powerlessness, her fear that she inhabits alien and incomprehensible places."[22] Yet Gilbert and Gubar draw perhaps too global a gender-based distinction when they claim that the difference between the male Western tradition of literary imprisonment and the female use of it lies in the fact that the first is "metaphysical and metaphorical" and the second "social and actual." There are certainly male writers—notably Genet—who experience and represent imprisonment existentially rather than merely metaphorically. It is true, however, that the nineteenth-century woman writer, and her twentieth-century inheritors, do not write the epic of the conquest of the world, but rather the lyric of enforced inwardness. Their imprisonment does not remain only negatively charged, for within it they rediscover the powers of the archetypal cave, for them a specifically female

space of rebirth and maternal creativity. In a sense the women writers of the nineteenth century, while inscribing a female tradition into the Western text, also prefigure the spatial trend that comes to dominate twentieth-century literature.

At the end of the nineteenth century, we find Huysmans's aesthetic version of monasticism recapitulating the Platonic-Christian paradox: it is not Des Esseintes's self-imposed confinement but the necessity of returning to the real world that he perceives as "a prison sentence."[23] In Dostoyevski's *Notes from the Underground* enclosure is a privileged space permitting the narrator freedom from the follies of the world. In the twentieth century, one has only to think of the airless rooms in Kafka's fictions, Joyce's Dublin, Eliot's London, Mann's sanatorium, Faulkner's "sanctuary," Ionesco's claustrophobic stages, Beckett's rooms, in order to have an idea of the varieties of enclosures that serve as major settings in all literary genres. In such places, whether they function as an individual or a collective prison, a paradigm of hell or cell, time tends to take the "form of space": experience becomes spatialized. In Gregor Samsa's room as in the community on top of the magic mountain, time loses its linearity and becomes a kind of eternity rendering clock and calendar divisions meaningless. While the eternalization of time has revolutionary technical and philosophical effects in literature, it is a familiar experience to prisoners. Arthur Koestler found the fictional equivalent of his own sense of time in prison in Hans Castorp's account of the soup he received every day at noon but which finally seemed to be the same soup because of his impression of living the same day over and over again: *Ewigheitssuppe*, "everlasting soup."[24]

The predominance of enclosure in the modernist literary tradition has to do with a distrust of the reality of the outer world and a tendency for the mind to turn inward upon itself. Formally, this phenomenon manifests itself in an abandonment of the novel's traditional diachronic structure for what Joseph Frank, in his seminal 1945 article, called "spatial form." For Frank, modernist writers such as Eliot, Pound, Proust, Joyce, and Djuna Barnes "intend the reader to apprehend their work spatially, in a moment of time, rather than as a sequence."[25] Proustian memory, for example, operates in space more than in time. Proust presents his reader with snapshots of his characters taken at various periods of time juxtaposed with each other as impressionists juxtapose dabs

of paint, requiring the reader, like the viewer, to fuse them. The reader, for Frank, perceives modernist fictional discourse more in terms of a synchronic (spatial) structure than a diachronic story.[26] Frank discerns in the modernist sensibility what Mircea Eliade finds in primitive ritual: a nostalgia for "mythic" time through the transcendence of historical time.

Frank's concept of spatiality would seem to be metaphorical and unrelated to the representation of physical space in a literary text. Gérard Genette, in his essay "L'Espace littéraire," as well as more recent critics, have in fact attempted to divide the concept of literary space into two categories: "textual" and "geographical."[27] The latter is referential and thus deals with signifieds; the former is auto-referential and deals with signifiers. Critics who are interested in the literary representation of geographical space tend to be phenomenological or archetypal in their orientation; those who treat textual space ("the atemporal and reversible disposition of signs, words, sentences, discourses," as defined by Genette) tend to be semioticists and/or followers of Joseph Frank. Yet other "spatial form" critics (and Genette himself in another essay) perceive the close causal relationship between "spatiality" and texts that value description over narration, setting over action, and thus the linguistic representation of physical space over narrative sequence. Description in fiction, because it must consider things to be perceived simultaneously, tends to suspend time and spread the narrative in space.[28] As Bachelard showed in *The Poetics of Space* and Poulet in *Proustian Space*, the representation of place can be a way of compressing time.

Spatiality and in particular representations of enclosure may be discerned in everyday speech as well as in literary texts as evidence of a peculiarly modern spatial way of thinking. So concludes the linguist Georges Matoré in his *L'Espace humain*. As an illustration of the fact that we perceive our relation to others and to the world in spatial terms, Matoré notes that we are aware of the "closed in" quality of our lives and constantly search for "openings." We ask if communication is possible between our consciousness and the outer world, if there is an exit or an access. Yet if we discover such a way out, we may discover also an unlimited chaos more frightening than the closed world to which we are accustomed. Matoré compares this sense of stifling accompanied by fear of change to the feelings of prisoners:

> . . . Those who have lived in prison are aware of the attachment that the captive shows for his cell as well as of the fear that he has of being transferred to another. For this prisoner with whom contemporary man seems to identify, the door does not represent an exit or hope, for it is only through the window that he could escape. If we leave the closed and familiar atmosphere, surrounded by reassuring walls . . . we enter into another world, unknown and full of anguish.[29]

This type of spatial thinking is particularly manifest in existentialist discourse with its reference to "situations," "traps," "exits," and even the concept of angst, etymologically related to *angustia*. That it should profoundly affect both the importance given to enclosing settings (thus to "spatiality") and the metaphors of the writers that concern us here should come as no surprise. What I shall hope to demonstrate is that the literary prisons in question manifest a continuity with the traditional prison *topos*, although profoundly modified by the historical consciousness of massive incarcerations. Existential not only in the sense that they serve as figures for some of the primary themes of existentialist philosophy, the literary prisons constitute a variant of the modern search for reality by turning inward, thus of imprisonment within the self. In some instances, the social or political awareness of prison (usually represented as a collective prison to be resisted) seems curiously at odds with the private cell (often an outgrowth of the romantic/monastic oxymoron, the place of freedom). The tension between resistance as ethos and the spiritual or aesthetic attractions of the cell resolve themselves differently in each writer and each work. Whereas the thematics of imprisonment will be of primary concern in our brief survey of writings directly concerned with wartime prisons, of equal importance in the study of the four writers here is the manner in which collective and cellular figures of enclosure structure the spatial order of certain texts.

Textual representations of imprisonment may be divided into two broad categories that I shall call *lexical* and *topographical*. The first, usually part of a metaphor, merely refers to a prison or another place of confinement in order to signify something else, as in the Platonic image of the body as prison of the soul or Camus's reference to the Marxist "prison of history." The interest of these in terms of an entire work lies in the fact that they

are often used in conjunction with (or may "unfold into") topographical prisons. The latter, figures of detailed description or of bare suggestion in fiction and poetry, images of both language and audiovisual effects in the produced play or film, are part of a represented or imagined decor in which events, mental or physical, take place. They require analysis from several angles. The simple question of what constitutes a topographical prison poses a number of problems.

For literary (as for other) purposes, a prison does not have to be a state penal institution or a cell with iron bars. A description of any type of enclosed space becomes a prison through an interaction among the points of view of the author, the character portrayed as imprisoned, and the reader or viewer. At the same time, the space perceived as prison may appear as protective, cozy, deathlike, or liberating. These enclosures (as we saw in the earlier examples) may be of an individual or a collective type: the cell or the camp, the room or the city. They may be represented directly as theatrical or narrative setting, or they may be perceived through a character's imagination. A prison also may be defined through binary opposition as between open and closed, nature and artifice, motion and motionlessness, time and timelessness, power and powerlessness, imprisoner and imprisoned.

Decor of any sort may be used, to adopt Roland Barthes' terms, as both *function* and *index*.[30] In its role as function, decor resembles what the Russian formalists have called a "bound" motif,[31] an element crucial to and instrumental in the development of plot. Sartre's theory of a "theater of situation" and his practice of it in his plays are based on such a concept of decor. The drama of relations between the three "damned souls" in *Huis Clos* (*No Exit*) is inconceivable without the Second-Empire parlor holding them captive. The entire plot of *Les Séquestrés d'Altona* (*The Condemned of Altona*) is based on the melodramatic question of whether or not Frantz will emerge from his room, of whether or not the character "in situation" can create an exit. A topographical "prison" may function the same way in narrative. I have shown elsewhere how the plot of Kafka's *Metamorphosis* is based on the same use of confining space as that in Sartre's last play.[32]

The prison-decors that function on the level of plot as well as those that do not ("free" rather than "bound" motifs) also may

indicate other elements in the text, universal themes, other texts. The prison setting, in other words, may be metaphorical as well as functional. Thus Gregor Samsa's room indicates at various times his father's power, his own isolation from his environment, his true self, his paradoxical wish for freedom, death, and rebirth. The metaphorical value given the prison-space as well as its particular functional role results, as will be seen in the textual analyses, from values attributed by the writer, the narrator, the reader, and the consciousness of a character (point of view).

Although the personal experience with imprisonment and with the great imprisonments of our century is different in the case of each writer—all of Malraux's novels but his last were written before the Second World War, Sartre and Camus were influenced deeply by the war and the German Occupation, Genet's experience as a criminal appears to be apolitical—their textual prisons all reflect in some way the concerns of those who attempted to communicate directly to their readers the personal and historical meanings of the unprecedented confinements of the mid-twentieth century.

1 An Age of Reclusions

The resurgence of imprisonment as a major cultural symbol, while not entirely a result of historical events, at least bears witness to the widespread consciousness of the phenomenon around and during the war years, a period one writer called "an age of reclusions."[1] France, where the general confinement of the Occupation was combined with more specific reclusions and yet where an extraordinary number of writers remained articulate, presents perhaps the best field for observing the transformation of this experience into language.

Political imprisonment became known to those Frenchmen who went to fight in the Spanish civil war while the internment of resistants in Italy and Germany during the thirties also had its effect on the consciences of a few. However, between 1939 and 1945, millions of French people underwent an intense experience of collective confinement and individual isolation. Military service in the "phony war" meant for an unprecedented number incarceration in German prisoner-of-war (POW) camps. According to Pierre Gascar, by the summer of 1940 there were 1.5 million French prisoners of war in Germany and eighty thousand in France.[2] With the German Occupation in 1940, ordinary citizens in Paris found their city transformed into a closed world strewn with absurdly polite German officers whose presence was a constant reminder of who was in control and who was in captivity. Those who resisted learned what it was to lead an underground life.

The years 1941–43 were the time of massive arrests of resistants and Jews: imprisonment, internment, and deportation. Almost every French state prison was in part turned over to the Germans or to the Vichy government to house its political prison-

ers. Prisoners there were kept either in solitary confinement or with a few others in a cell and, as is well known, subjected to "interrogation," torture, and in some cases execution. Many of the prisoners were sent to one of a network of internment camps set up throughout the country. The largest and most famous of these were the camp at Compiegne, primarily for Resistance fighters, and the camp at Drancy, primarily for Jews. Prisoner-of-war camps, such as the one in which Malraux was interned at Toulouse, were used to intern fighters captured from the *maquis*. The massive deportations to concentration, work, and extermination camps in Germany, Poland, and elsewhere began in 1942 and reached their height in 1943.

It should not be overlooked that the practice of imprisonment and execution for political reasons did not cease in France with the end of the Occupation in 1944. Avowed or suspected collaborators were at that time interned in groups, as described by Céline in *D'un château l'autre* (*Castle to Castle*), or imprisoned in the same cells formerly occupied by resistants. The poetry of Brasillach written from Fresnes shortly before his execution in February 1945 manifests many of the same themes developed by Resistance poet-prisoners. Later in the postwar period, France found itself in the position of the oppressor abroad in both Indochina and Algeria. The use of concentration camps and torture by the French in Algeria was brought to public attention by Henri Alleg with *La Question* in 1958, a book that did not fail to suggest parallels with the Nazis. Also during the fifties the now famous Soviet Gulag was investigated by a group of former deportees to German camps headed in France by David Rousset.

A survey of the thousands of written works—documentaries, reports (*témoignages*), essays, novels, short stories, poetry, drama—inspired by their authors' imprisonment during the war years lies outside the scope of this volume. So does the interesting theoretical question of the difference between a "direct" report and a fictional or poetic treatment of an experience, both nonetheless within the domain of circumstantial literature. This chapter also will not be concerned with the question of literary merit in works dealing with what some consider to be indescribable or uncommunicable. What I have attempted to do here is to extract from some representative circumstantial writings pervasive general themes that emerge in the written portrayal of actual cellular and collective confinement.

The continuities between these and the themes associated with literary prisons perhaps show a need to attach oneself to a written tradition in order to write; the number of literary references made by the imprisoned writers is surprising. These themes also may be viewed as variations on an archetypal experience, modifications and dislocations of the traditional ones. As in the literary tradition the types of captivity portrayed in these writings are basically two: cellular and collective. We will examine first the phenomenon of cellular isolation, primarily by looking at the writings of prisoners at Fresnes, and then we will examine the themes associated with collective incarceration under the Occupation, in the POW camps, and in the concentration camps.

A good many French intellectuals and writers, as well as ordinary citizens, made their acquaintance with prison cells as a result of their resistance to the Nazi invaders and the Vichy collaborators. The experience seems to have prompted an overwhelming need to testify: to leave something, if only graffiti, in the form of written words.[3]

Jean Cayrol, looking back on his incarceration in Fresnes in *Lazare parmi nous* (*Lazarus among Us*), describes the typical stages undergone by a political prisoner. The first feeling is one of humiliation. Interrogated by the German authorities, the captive becomes aware of what it means to be completely at their mercy. Once in his cell (the stages described now begin to resemble almost to the letter those undergone by Meursault in *L'Etranger*) the prisoner's first reaction is an internal refusal to admit he is really in prison and to adapt to its strange, empty life. Once he admits the reality of his situation he attempts to organize a daily routine. But as the days pass and the sense of time becomes vaguer, the temptation is to retreat into a timeless "night" world and to evade present reality through sumptuous dreams. In this stage the prisoner becomes attached to his cell. As the cell develops into a protective carapace, the prisoner begins to prefer the vast landscapes of his dream world to real contact with the outside. For Cayrol, this cellular experience is like an antechamber, a preparation for the utterly isolated "Nacht und Nebel" (night and fog) classification that was to be his lot in Mauthausen.[4]

All of the prisoner-writers are concerned with the central question of liberty. On the whole, there seem to be three basic types of understanding of its meaning. On one level, the prisoner

simply states that he is closed in and cut off and that freedom is out there, beyond the prison walls, outside the cell window. On another level, prisoners discover, through the possibilities of exercising their will against the force of their captors, a new and more profound type of freedom than the one they knew "out there." A third understanding of freedom, on the model of that sought in the monastic cell, comes to the solitary prisoner through immersion in his inner world.

Snatched away from the context of his daily life, the Resistance activist can feel that he or she has been put away to stagnate while others are continuing to live, act, and work for the liberation of France.[5] Time in jail is wasted time, "mouldy time."[6] Simple pleasures such as walking in the street or the countryside, feeling the spring air or the sun, being near a familiar face, are rendered more vivid through nostalgia and come to represent freedom itself. The future and the past are perceived as full of goodness and beauty, the present as an absolute evil. Solitude in a prison cell bears no relation to creative solitude; the prisoner's thought, like his body, goes in circles.[7] In the worst conditions, the deprivation of contact with and moral support from other human beings can lead to madness. In all of these cases, freedom is perceived as something that can be only obtained beyond the walls, once the prison gates are opened. To be free is to be separated no longer from what one loves and to be able to control one's thoughts and actions.

Yet for some, imprisonment and even torture produces a new freedom of action. Mauriac, in his preface to Seghers's 1943–44 anthology of poet-prisoners, expresses it in this way: "In the prison cell at Fresnes, . . . men for the first time discovered that they were free, free to refuse to give up the names of their comrades, free to prefer death."[8] As opposed to the dispersed freedom outside the walls, the prisoner isolated, humiliated, or tortured by the Gestapo discovers an absolute and essential freedom of choice. Rather than perceiving the walls of the cell (which are, after all, material extensions of the enemy's power) as limits depriving the victim of his liberty "out there" the prisoner in this case learns a hard lesson in the exercise of freedom by pitting his will against that of his captor. When a human being is deprived of everything except his own essential being, the "pure flame" of justice can emerge.[9] This exercise of liberty can take the form of refusing to

"talk" or to collaborate with the enemy in any way, or of a direct act of resistance. It also can take the form of a secretly composed poem.

Claude Bellanger, in Seghers's anthology of poet-prisoners, speaks of a poetic renaissance that flourished in the political prisons. It is as if a poem were a crucial act of defiance, an affirmation of humanity in the face of the enemy's will to dehumanize, a step toward liberation. Similarly, Aragon, in his preface to the collection of sonnets composed by Jean Cassou in his prison cell, calls Cassou's poetry "a great challenge thrown out to the conditions of shame."[10] Aragon develops the theme in his own "prison" poetry, for example in "Richard-Coeur-de-Lion" in which he affirms his solidarity with all who suffer because of a (temporarily) more powerful enemy, yet offers hope:

> On aura beau rendre la nuit plus sombre
> Un prisonnier peut faire une chanson
> They make the night darker in vain
> A prisoner can write a song

The song, reaching the prisoner's fellow countrymen, evokes a response of liberty:

> Tous les Français ressemblent à Blondel
> Quelque soit le nom dont nous l'appelions
> La liberté comme un bruissement d'ailes
> Répond au chant de Richard-Coeur-de-Lion.[11]
>
> All the French resemble Blondel
> By whatever name we call him.
> Freedom, like a flapping of wings,
> Answers the song of Richard the Lion-hearted.

Several poets testify that poetry kept them from going mad or from succumbing to despair in prison. For Gabriel Audisio, poetry offered not only a form of personal salvation but also a general salvation for all those imprisoned metaphorically in the "misery of human conditions."[12]

The discovery of human solidarity, first with fellow prisoners and then with all resistants or with France itself, is another way of overcoming the temptation to despair in solitary confinement, of defying the enemy, and of asserting a belief in freedom. Richard the Lion-hearted and Joan of Arc are evoked as symbols of captive, apparently defeated but triumphant, France with whom

the prisoner can identify.[13] Madeleine Riffaud, in a poem entitled "Mitard" written when she was sentenced to death, expresses her passage from despair to hope through a feeling of solidarity with those who died before her.[14] Audisio, discovering a new kind of fraternity with his cellmates, all deprived of profession and social class so that only bare human beings remain, recalls a sentence from Malraux: "It is not by constantly scratching the individual that one finally meets Man."[15] He makes a play on the word cell, comparing a cell in a human body to a prison cell so that the prison, with its separate cells, comes to resemble a unified body.[16] The same liberating discovery of a sense of solidarity with other prisoners, along with the use of literary reference, occurs during the "purges" in an anonymous prisoner-writer accused of collaboration. After weeks of isolation, the first human, fraternal voice he hears is like a "resurrection" in the silence of the tomb. He then remembers the prisoners' tapping code, is able to establish communication with those in the cells next to him, and vividly recalls Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*.[17] Brasillach's sense of solidarity in his death cell extends itself to those on the other side of the ideological spectrum, the resistants formerly imprisoned in the same cell:

> O mes fraternels adversaires!
> Hier est proche d'aujourd'hui.
> Malgré nous, nous sommes unis
> Par l'espoir et par la misère.[18]
>
> O my fraternal adversaries!
> Yesterday is close to today.
> In spite of ourselves, we are united
> By hope and by misery.

Another way of reacting to solitary confinement is to turn inward in meditation and out toward the natural world. The beauty of nature, the happiness derived from it are experienced more intensely through a barred window than in freedom: "Look here, from my prison, I cry out for whatever is in harmony with moonlight, a starry night, a sunrise or sunset, a flower, a scent, the song of a bird; life is worth living, do you understand?"[19] As the prisoner becomes detached from the course of events in the day-to-day world, his impression of being limited by space may disappear

along with his sense of time. Night is often the symbol used to evoke this state as in another poem by Brasillach:

> Vienne la nuit que je m'embarque,
> Loin des murs de ma prison:
> Elle suffit pour qu'ils s'écartent
> Je retrouve mes horizons.[20]
>
> Let night fall, so that I may sail off,
> Far from my prison walls:
> When it comes, they draw apart
> And I find my horizons again.

Because of the limits imposed, the prison cell can, like the monastic cell, induce a contemplative state leading to ecstasy (in its literal sense, the experience of leaving the self), and thus an experience of total liberty unconditioned by space and time.[21] The experience is like a mystical trip to what Jean Cassou calls "a country without name / Where night after night oppresses and effaces me."[22] This country is one in which the mystic loses the limits of the self and touches infinity, the poet dreams and gleans images, the prisoner experiences an unprecedented liberation. The more restricted the physical limits, the more liberating the introspection: "To wander, delirious, in this net! / O sacred reverie of captivity!"[23]

Literature of and about the cellular experience in this period thus continues the monastic-mystic-romantic tradition of inner freedom through confinement while adding to it the notion of liberty as resistance, individual or collective, through action or through creation. Within the collective prison that was the German Occupation it is naturally the theme of liberty through resistance and solidarity that dominates.

"Prison" is often used as a metaphor for the Occupation, or even the entire war, as when Jean Guéhenno states in his journal of the Occupation entitled *Dans la prison*, "All France, all Europe is in prison."[24] For Guéhenno, as for the prisoners at Fresnes, writing is a way of coping with and defying confinement: "It is a question of painting the prison walls."[25] Edith Thomas refers to "my country in the prison of buried Europe."[26] Supervielle, evoking the spirit of Joan of Arc, cries out that modern France, cut off not only by the enemy but from the divine as well, is more imprisoned than at the time of Joan: "even our sky is closed, with

no exit."[27] Claude Aveline portrays France on the eve of liberation as a prisoner standing up defiantly in her chains.[28] Herma Briffault equates the situation of the occupied with that of Meursault: "We, too, felt imprisoned; we, too, wondered what crime we had committed to merit our fate; we, too, were awaiting some weird sort of execution, and felt only hostility to the hostile society that had hemmed us in."[29]

Many of the writers on the Occupation speak of the sense of stagnation, of impotence, and of humiliation imposed on them by the conditions of their "prison." Jean Bruller, better known under the pseudonym Vercors, in his *Silence de la mer* gives the example of not being able to strike back at a Gestapo officer who bloodied the nose of a teenage boy as typical of the pervasive impotence of the occupied vis-à-vis the occupier. Being deprived of one's power to act leads to a sense of humiliation, a degraded image of the self with which, as one writer (anticipating Camus) put it, the "masters" seemed to infect their captives as if they were passing on a plague.[30] Added to this were of course the day-to-day sufferings—the cold; the hunger; the long searches and waits for food; the loss of the right to act, write, and speak freely—and the sense of isolation, of being separated from what was "really" happening and being unable to affect the course of events. From a postliberation perspective, those who participated in the Resistance view their clandestine action as the only form of self-assertion possible in an intolerable situation. Like the prison, the Occupation was for many the occasion to discover an exhilarating sense of solidarity not possible in ordinary life. Texts on the Occupation are often written in the plural. "We" are pitted against "them" or "France" against the "enemy" or "Free France" against the "collaborators." To affirm this sense of collective solidarity was already to make an act of resistance.

The "prisoners" of the Occupation, like those in Fresnes, discovered new dimensions of the meaning of freedom, but through collective more than through individual acts. Writers with as different ideological orientations as Mauriac, Guéhenno, and Sartre concur in their affirmation of the paradox that the French people rediscovered freedom under the German Occupation. Guéhenno and Mauriac compare this rediscovery with the birth of the idea during the French Revolution. Mauriac cites Saint-Just, "The French nation votes for the liberty of the world!"[31] but goes on to

say that for France to save this world for humanity once again it had to experience with the rest of Europe massacres, deportation, captivity. Hope (as in Mauriac's novels) arises from the abyss just as Samson under the whip of the Philistines looked toward the sky. For Guéhenno, too, the road to liberty must be the hardest one: "The men of 1789 knew what Freedom was! It is because they were coming out of servitude. We will know it again, perhaps soon, if we go back there."[32] The sense of liberty becomes clear through opposition to tyranny; it is not a "natural" quality of life but something for which people must fight and die.

If the captivity of the Occupation gave Mauriac and Guéhenno the opportunity to reinforce their democratic-Catholic and liberal-agnostic conceptions of liberty, it gave Sartre the occasion to forge his existentialist one. Looking back on the Occupation shortly after the liberation, Sartre begins his essay *The Republic of Silence* with what now appears as a nostalgic paradox: "We have never been so free as under the German Occupation."[33] It is a paradox that underlies Sartre's entire concept of liberty and of situation. Exile, captivity, and the presence of death, realities of life usually masked during everyday existence, were unveiled during the Occupation as "our *lot*, our destiny, the profound source of our human reality." For those involved in the Resistance it was clear (as it is not always so clear in Sartre's extension of this concept) that to choose a certain course of action, especially to choose not to reveal the names of comrades when under torture, was to choose for others as well, to forge with one's acts an idea of liberty. The solitary, captive individual, forced to define himself by his choices, chooses for everyone.

Sartre's concept of liberty here reads somewhat like a philosophical commentary on one of the freedoms discovered by the prisoners at Fresnes, the freedom to resist. Sartre describes more fully the conditions of captivity that produced acts of freedom in the second essay in *Situations III*, "Paris under the Occupation," first published in London and written to explain the Occupation to the British. He compares the sense of shame and impotence experienced by the occupied Parisians to the feelings of the men in the stalag where he was interned in 1939. One of the goals of the conquerors, in both cases, was to give the captives an "immonde image" (a disgusting image) of themselves. Add to this the feeling of being deprived of a future, and man is no longer project but

object. The captive situation thus is seen as a kind of eternal present in which the captives risk abdicating their humanity to their captors. Resistance then becomes the only exit available, the only chance of forging liberty from prison. "This dehumanization, this petrification of man was so intolerable that many, to escape it, to recover a future, threw themselves into the Resistance. A strange future, barred by torture, prison, and death, but one which we at least produced with our own hands."[34]

The situation of the POW camp, where Sartre, along with other internees, made the discovery of the first person plural, had posed conditions that paralleled, but also differed from those in the later "prison" of the Occupation. The problem there was not so much emerging from isolation to join others, but dealing with the constant presence of others. Francis Ambrière writes of a "gregarious condition" in which each prisoner knew everything about the others.[35] Sartre, acknowledging the influence of his camp experience on the creation of *No Exit*, writes of "the feeling that I had had, in the stalag, of living constantly, totally under the look of others, and the hell that naturally established itself there."[36]

The constant presence of others is, however, double-edged, fraternal as well as infernal. It offers an intensity of companionship whose loss can be a source of anguish upon return to normal life. In analyzing the portrayal of separation in the paintings of Giacometti, Sartre recalls a perception he had in a café during the war of the distances that separate people. The distances, the separation were "normal," but the perception was possible because Sartre had just returned from prison camp.

> I had spent two months in a prison camp, that is, in a can of sardines, and I had there experienced absolute proximity. . . . I had to learn about life "at a respectful distance" all over again, and my sudden agoraphobia betrayed my vague regret for the "unanimous" life from which I had just been severed forever.[37]

Robert Brasillach, whose experiences in a German oflag cannot have been too painful, is even more nostalgic in his recollection of the closeness and companionship made possible in the conditions of the camp.

> Captivity, like boarding school, means promiscuity but also proximity. Horizons restricted by the same scenes permit, as life can never do, discussion, friendship, perpetual contact, sometimes irritating, sometimes precious. At eighteen, one has all that, and little by little life takes you away from it. After thirty, one suddenly finds it again, and leaving it is like a new farewell to youth.[38]

Writers whose experience was in internment or concentration camps portray a more intense form of promiscuity/solidarity. There, the perception of other prisoners as infernal or fraternal could mean the difference between life and death. One of the Nazi principles was to separate the prisoners from each other as much as possible, to divide and conquer. Hence the system of colored triangles to distinguish Jews, Communists, other political prisoners, and common criminals and the practice of designating a prisoner as "Kapo" or "Blockälteste" to survey and report on the behavior of his fellows. In the condition of near-starvation in which most deportees were maintained, the tendency is to look out for one's own survival; several witnesses write of the SS's delight in seeing prisoners fight over a piece of bread. Organizing any sort of community, working together for the benefit of the group, is thus a way of resisting the basic intentions of the "masters." Nearly all of the concentration camp *témoignages* (testimonies) put much emphasis on simple acts of generosity or solidarity: the sharing of food rations, the protection of the identities of those sought for "selection." The sense of solidarity is at times limited to those of the same national, religious, or political persuasion, but it also may include a feeling of oneness with all victims, with all opposed to those in power. Yet unlike the feeling of solidarity or unanimity in the Resistance or even in the POW camps, in these camps it is an unnatural state, won with great effort. The more usual, day-to-day experience is one of bitter isolation—from home, family, friends, work, news of the events of the war. Robert Antelme testifies that in spite of, perhaps because of, the constant intimate contact with others, each prisoner is in the end thrown back into his personal form of suffering, his own inviolable solitude.[39] Jean Cayrol's novels and essays demonstrate how this sense of isolation, the feeling that each one is alone in his own "kingdom" or

"prison," continues with the deportee who returns home, Lazarus.[40]

The aspect of the concentration camp that seems strangest to the prisoners during the early part of their internment is its organization, its system. The new arrivals often have the impression of having arrived in a world hermetically sealed: *vase clos* (sealed jar, retort) is the term most used to describe it. The domain of the camp seems to have no relation to the world outside except through a mysterious chain of command. It is a world both infernal and absurd. The most frequent comparisons made to evoke the overall phenomenon of the camp are not to reality but to literature, primarily to Dante and Kafka.

With the discovery of the works of Kafka in France during the prewar and war years, many saw in the writings of the Czech Jew a prefiguration of the historically unprecedented world of the camps.[41] David Rousset, who coined the adjective "concentrationnaire," defined the guiding principle of the camp as humor, a "tragic buffoonery" where the world of Kafka (along with that of Jarry's Ubu) leaves fantasy for reality. Like Josef K the deportee is condemned for unknown, or at least extralegal, reasons and is perpetually on trial. "The trial, here, is never finished, never judged."[42] The endless formalities, the paradoxical combination of an overcivilized, even polite bureaucracy with primitive, illogical cruelty also recalls the world of Kafka. The brutal roll calls, the cruel punishments given by the SS on any pretext, the useless work—work of Sisyphus—all contribute to a sense of mechanized absurdity that, if one were detached from it, would be comic. One could never "understand" the camps, never establish a nonarbitrary unity or indeed a sense of coherence linking one experience to the next. Camp inmates were forced to live from day to day in an eternal present. This is one of the qualities of camp existence that Cayrol finds reflected first in Kafka and then in Camus and the subsequent "literature of the absurd."[43]

The eternal present has literary roots deeper than Kafka. A sense of the future being cut off and the past alive only in memories, dreams, and regrets, is perceived by many writers to have its counterpart not in any previous life experience but in the *Inferno*. "Lasciate ogni speranza" (Abandon all hope), one inmate observes, would have been a more appropriate inscription for the gate to Auschwitz than "Arbeit macht frei."[44] Yet the captives of the Nazis do not even have the knowledge of Dante's prisoners

that their suffering is intimately linked to their sins on earth. If "*l'enfer*" is the name most frequently given the camps by survivors, it is a hell of victims rather than of sinners. For many, the camps reaffirmed a belief in the existence of evil. Malraux, who explores the theme through his conversations with former deportees in the *Antimémoires*, recalls telling Bernanos, "With the camps, Satan visibly reappeared in the world."[45]

Endless waiting is a way of life in the eternal present. The past becomes legendary and the future abstract.[46] Time is no longer linear but circular, an agonizing repetition of days all resembling each other, the endless consumption of an everlasting soup of watery rutabagas. Charlotte Delbo's *Aucun de nous ne reviendra* (None of us will return) emphasizes the cumulative effect of endless, repetitive suffering. A life lived outside of the human dimensions of time comes to resemble death. Many former deportees in fact refer to the time they spent in camp as death and their return as resurrection.[47] Like the prisoners in their cells, some camp inmates find that the loss of time sense also makes the limits of space disappear. *Night*, the title Elie Wiesel gave to the account of his experiences in Auschwitz, implies not only utter despair, but also an infinite desolation in which there are no fixed points. Within this desolation, through loss of contact with time as it is measured outside, one can pass from the circumscribed world of the camp into a vast inner world of dreams, imagination, and hallucination.[48] Occasionally a former deportee will recall with a certain nostalgia the inner, spiritual freedom paradoxically found in the camps through escape from normal time and normal responsibility.[49] Unlike the writings from prison cells or the Occupation, however, the camp literature shows little of the prison-freedom paradox in the romantic tradition. If there is liberation, it is of another sort: an insight into the depths of human experience and a consequent heightened perception of freedom lost. A view of the sky, for example, is more intense and more liberating from within the camp than it could possibly be in normal life. Adamov (who was not deported but interned in a camp at Argolès) writes, "I saw it [the sky] in all its purity as man never knows how to see, except from the depths of misfortune."[50]

The functioning of the infernal system in the camps depends on the humiliation of the victims. Like all prisoners the camp internee is given a number and deprived of his or her name. The

language used by the camp authorities reinforces this depersonalization. The prisoners are not referred to as human beings but as "Stücke," "Figuren," or even "Scheisse" or "Dreck" (pieces, figures, shit, garbage). Examples of terrorization, beating, torture, as well as the constant threat of being "selected" to go to the gas chamber, are legion in the accounts of camp survivors. So are more usual, everyday means of humiliation such as constant hunger, cold, dirt and lice, fatigue, forced labor. The theme of one of the most reflective accounts, Robert Antelme's *L'Espèce humaine* (*The Human Species*), is that the guiding principle of the camps is the determination to make the prisoners lose their humanity but that the "human species" resists and reaffirms itself. Malraux heard the same idea from former deportees, one of whom told him, "The supreme goal was to make the prisoners lose, in their own eyes, their human quality." Another described the Nazi theory as "treat men like mud and they will become mud in reality."[51]

Several accounts bear witness to the success of this technique and to the disappearance, in the camps, of what Western civilization traditionally has defined as human values. Reduced through deprivation to elementary feelings of hunger, thirst, cold, and fear, presented with a constant image of themselves as objects, it is hardly surprising that some prisoners abandoned themselves to a subhuman existence. There are numerous stories of inmates stealing bread from weaker fellow prisoners, of trafficking in gold teeth or in prostitution with the Nazis, even of cannibalism. There were those called the "muslims" who seemed to have lost the possibility of human contact with the other prisoners, who had given up washing, picking their lice, or otherwise caring for themselves, and who seemed to spend their time wandering or lying on their bunks with lost, apathetic stares. A "muslim" had lost what many seem to see as the basic moral precept for a camp prisoner: *Ne pas crever* (not to crack).

This elementary ethic can function either as a dehumanizing factor, as in stealing bread from the sick, or as a form of effective resistance to the captors' power over the captives and thus as a form of liberty. Malraux's observation that camp prisoners learned that "the will to live was not animal, but obscurely sacred" is borne out by the accounts.[52] According to Pierre-Henri Simon, when a prisoner is reduced to his barest state (*dénuement*) through

suffering he either abdicates his dignity or accedes to the "highest spiritual life."[53] For Antelme, the state of *dénuement* brings with it the realization that the Nazis' basic intentions are to dehumanize and kill. Thus life itself assumes a "sacred value."[54] Thus in his most captive state the prisoner discovers a superb new freedom: the freedom to resist what "they" want him to become. *Ne pas crever* becomes a form of revolt against the constantly implied injunction: "*crève.*" This basic law of resistance can take on different forms. Most of the witnesses writing on the camp experience agree that those who had a strong faith (Jewish, Christian, or Communist) had the best chance of survival. Others invented their own form of resistance through simple acts or gestures through which they affirmed personal dignity and liberty. Creativity was one method: theater, music, poetry. As in Fresnes there seems to have existed in the camps a need to express oneself through words. Michel Borowicz, in his presentation of writings of prisoners, speaks in terms of a "literary bacillus" rampant in the camps.[55] Poetry, for the obvious reason that it can be committed to memory, is the most usual means of expression. Even if one did not write, or remember, a retreat into dreams or into mystic contemplation could be a type of resistance and of liberty.

Those who survived the camps proved by their very existence the resisting power of the will to live. But what of their return to "real" life? It often is described in terms of a resurrection, a trip from the world of the dead to the world of the living. For Jean Cayrol, the figure of the returning deportee is represented best by Lazarus. After his resurrection the Lazarean man sees the world with new eyes, the simplest scenes of daily life seem strange and new. He also may feel disappointed by the long desired return to "liberty." Life "out there" may turn out to be not as free as his dreams in the camp, social injustices still exist, and there may be a feeling that his suffering has served no purpose, that it has not redeemed anything. He inevitably experiences an immense gulf between himself and those who have not undergone the camp experience. He also finds it difficult to reestablish normal human relationships. He carries within him wherever he goes a sense of separation and fundamental solitude.

Sometimes the returnee is perceived as separated from the rest of humanity not only because he has lived through "hell" but also because others expect that his suffering must have given him

a more profound understanding of human existence. But is there any knowledge or meaning to be gleaned from the camp experience? In general the accounts do not even touch on this question except perhaps to warn their readers to be vigilant so that the *concentrationnaire* world never comes into existence again. Charlotte Delbo, in *None of Us Will Return,* describes what was learned in the camps as "useless knowledge"—knowledge from a context so totally different that it is of no use outside the closed world. No one can justify the camps, but believers of various sorts can at least account for them in reference to some existing system. Jews may attach them to a long history of suffering and persecution with analogy to the book of Job. Christians can take hope in the redemption promised by suffering and point to the example of Christ, although, as Delbo points out in *The Passion according to Ravensbruck,* the quantity of suffering seems strangely disproportionate. For Marxists, the lessons to be drawn from the camps are fairly clear. A natural outgrowth of the capitalist system, the concentration camp system reflects its progenitor in an extreme, grotesque form. The deportees' existence, like that of the proletariat, reveals the dependence of human beings on economic structures.[56] The SS–prisoner relationship is merely an exaggeration of class relationships in capitalist society.[57]

Other nonsocialist inmates nonetheless see in the camp system a distorted but true image of modern society: a repression of individuality by bureaucracy and power relationships. Ionesco, upon reading Rousset, perhaps states it most succinctly, "The concentration camp is society as it is in its essence, quintessential."[58] For Cayrol, there exists a "quotidien concentrationnaire" manifest in institutional and impersonal control of thought and action, in the sense of absurdity and grotesqueness with which the individual confronts his world.[59] Adamov, in the "Journal terrible" written shortly after his internment, finds metaphysical as well as social implications in the model of collective confinement. He sees separation, the apparently unbridgeable distance between one human being and another, as well as separation from "what used to be called God" as one of the basic realities of our time, seen in its purest form in the camps.[60] Internment life, in its horrible simplicity, is somehow truer than daily life, where the starkness of reality often is masked. If the horror of wartime is episodic, it is also a clear revelation of something more eternal: "the great

primitive horror, that of being a man."[61] It is this same perception of life's horror and absurdity that entered European literature with Kafka and became one of its staples under the influence of existentialism. The literary tradition of prison-world and prison-cell as images of the human condition and paradoxical generators of human freedom is not broken by the war and camp experience but absorbed and refracted by it. Malraux, whose novels up until the last one were written before the camps, and Camus, Sartre, and Genet, whose works span the war, all reveal in some way parallels with and amplifications of both tradition and *témoignage*.

2 Absurdity and Transcendence

André Malraux, who once prophesied a return to the "Pascalian" mode in modern literature,[1] terminated his strictly literary career by introducing Pascal's prison onto the contemporary scene. In the last pages of *Les Noyers d'Altenburg (The Walnut Trees of Altenburg)*, the narrator cites the renowned fragment representing the human condition as a group of men in chains, each watching the execution of his fellows and awaiting his own turn. Vincent Berger's recollection of Pascal gives dimension and continuity to the narrative of experiences and memories he has been constructing within a German prisoner-of-war camp near Chartres. Yet Pascal's image is not brought in simply as a comparison with the experiences of the Second World War. Walter Berger, at Altenburg, refers to it before the outbreak of World War I, and its presence is felt throughout the novel. If Malraux's own conception of the prison as singularly representative of the dilemma of modern man is clearest in this final work, it had been with him in some form from the beginning.

Writing from 1940 to 1942, after five months of incarceration and an ingenious escape from a prisoner-of-war camp near Sens, Malraux brought immediate experience to the creation of his unfinished novel. Still, the POW camp was not a concentration camp, the *témoignages* had not yet been circulated in France, and the extent of suffering that modern, "civilized" men could impose on other human beings through collective imprisonment was not yet a matter of general knowledge. Malraux's artistic intuitions drew on life and tradition, but also preceded history. Looking back on his work in 1967, he found that some of his fundamental preoccupations had, as it were, taken on a stark and explicit form with the Nazi camps.

> I have been thinking about the camps for twenty years. Horror and torture have occurred in almost all my books, at a time when only penal colonies were known. My experience is almost without value. . . . And it is not a question of experience, but of the only dialogue deeper than that of man and death.[2]

The "dialogue" involves the problem of evil, or of man's cruelty to man, and Malraux goes on to state that it has been expressed best in the works of Dostoyevski, Cervantes, Defoe, and Villon—men of the penal colony, the pillory, or the jail. The struggle of the alienated or isolated individual, cut off from his fellow humans not only by bars or barbed wire but by his experience of evil, had long been an image in the European mind. Malraux here perceives the link between imprisonment as a *topos* of the imagination and as unimaginable reality.

Malraux's long-standing preoccupation probably explains why he was one of the first European writers to deal with concentration and internment camps in fiction. He wrote *Le Temps du mépris* at a time when political prisoners in Germany were being "concentrated" in former common-law prisons, but when the outside world knew very little about their situation. Although Malraux was imprisoned three times,[3] it is probably true that for his complex understanding of incarceration as a symbol of the human condition, his experience is "almost without value." Still, personal experience no doubt interacts with Malraux's sense of affinity with a certain literary tradition and his historical vision to produce a fictional world in which imprisonment plays a major structural and thematic role.

While enclosures of various sorts appear in the early "farfelu" novels, topographical and lexical prisons in conjunction with what might be called Malraux's variations on Pascalian themes begin to appear in *Les Conquérants* (*The Conquerors*), develop in *La Voie royale* (*The Royal Way*), are telescoped into the climactic scene of *La Condition humaine* (*Man's Fate*), appear as the major space in *Le Temps du mépris* (*Days of Wrath*), are treated briefly in *L'Espoir* (*Man's Hope*), and are integrated most fully into the representational and metaphorical domains of *Les Noyers*. Each novel portrays in some form the "dialogue" mentioned above and in each representation of imprisonment, one senses the trace of

Pascal—not only the men in chains but also the paradoxical cell (*cachot*) and the room without *divertissement*. As many readers have noted, Malraux is attracted by the absurdity of the human condition represented by Pascal's prison while rejecting the other side of the coin: its potential as preparation for Christian salvation. What has not been sufficiently pointed out is the fact that Malraux has not only accepted but integrated into his literary vision the paradox at the heart of Pascal's prison. Although Malraux's prisoners do not believe in God or in any world beyond this one, they are all in search of a form of salvation. Their awareness of imprisonment serves as a springboard—either toward a decision to act, or toward an almost mystical illumination, a new order of awareness. No less than for Pascal, the problem of freedom is at the heart of prisons as Malraux envisages them.

A prison scene figures only briefly and in flashback in Malraux's first published novel, *Les Conquérants*, but it represents one of the most significant formative experiences of the central character Garine. It is in prison that Garine's dominant view of the absurd as a ruling force in life and of organized society as its representative is formed. Arrested and convicted in Switzerland for financing abortions, he experiences, like Camus's Meursault, a feeling of being a stranger or a spectator at his own trial. Only later, in his prison cell, does he fully realize that he, Garine, is to be judged and that a system of social "justice" threatens to deprive him of his freedom. Life in prison looms before him as "humiliating," "larval." The threat of such a life forces him into action: he finally obtains a reprieve. In a letter to the narrator he explains his reason, "I have an idea of my destiny . . . that cannot accept prison for that grotesque motive" (*C* 62). The grotesque motive refers not only to his particular "crime" but to the whole order of crime and punishment established by society. Garine's conception of his destiny does not include submission to any order. Yet the prison experience establishes in Garine a duality that will not leave him. The fight against absurdity that he wages in China is coupled with an intimate feeling of powerlessness. When he is sick and confined to a hospital room, Garine reexperiences in that enclosure the sense of passivity and absurdity that overcame him in prison. After a long combat, "the absurd finds its rights again" (*C* 152).

The memory of certain spaces acts as a constant counterbalance to and potential undermining of Garine's life of action, his

struggle against the absurd. Garine's dual existence in space—within the closed, passive chambers of his memory and in the dynamic world of his adventures—parallel his version of the Pascalian duality: the understanding that human existence is fundamentally absurd but that one cannot live within the absurd. By the end of *La Voie royale*, and more fully in the later works, the freedom–prison paradox acquires a more metaphysical quality, an experience of transcendence.

Malraux's second novel contains more lexical "prisons" than any of his other works. These appear usually in the form of similes: an abstract concept (destiny) or an important setting in the novel (the forest along the royal way) is compared to a prison or a cell. The novel's protagonists, Claude Vannec and Perken, encounter as well a series of topographical prisons: boat and cabin, on their way to Indochina, two huts where they are imprisoned by tribesmen in the mountains, a field where they are encircled by the tribesmen. The two levels intersect, though not as successfully as in the later novels, showing Malraux's deepened fascination and his groping with the implications of the prison metaphor. Claude and Perken, more than Garine, struggle in the dialogue against evil. Each of these men conceives of his destiny in terms of a prisoner's fight against an imprisoning authority.

The boat on which Claude and Perken conclude their agreement to venture together on the royal way represents for Claude something of what prison represents for Garine. One lives there as a larva, passive and dreaming, deprived of the ability to act. Just after Perken confronts Claude with some basic, uncomfortable questions, the latter, left without *divertissement*, perceives his cabin as a cell:

> The atmosphere of the cabin fell down on Claude like the door of a cell. Perken's question remained with him, like another prisoner. And his objection. No, there were not so many ways to win one's freedom! (*VR* 34)

Perken had asked Claude two questions: first, what he expected from his life and second, what he "resisted" in making decisions. Claude's reply to the second was "the consciousness of death" and Perken's objection was "true death is decline" (*la déchéance*) (*VR* 34). Claude's situation within his "cell" then prompts a long meditation on death's dominant role in rendering life futile and his

personal combat against futility. The two fundamental reasons for his search for sculptures in Indochina—the need to possess "eternal" things and the need for risk, both forms of struggle against death and absurdity—are formulated here. Claude's combat is to be waged not against the banal fact of dying but against the horror of accepting existence as it is. All that can be expected in such a struggle, he realizes, is a temporary victory, "that temporary destruction of the relationship between prisoner and master" (*VR* 35).

Claude's situation is analogous to Malraux's understanding of the heroes of the books he later called tales written by prisoners reconquering the world: *Robinson Crusoe*, *Don Quixote*, and *The Idiot*.[4] Within the cabin, Claude recognizes himself as an alienated individual preparing his struggle for liberation and for reconnection with the world of other human beings. "His plan, as long as he had sustained it alone, had cut him off from the world and bound him to an incommunicable universe like that of the blind or the mad" (*VR* 36–37). The comparison with blindness and madness foreshadows the figure of Grabot. Claude's journey will take him through a temporary triumph to another prison.

Two elements will determine Claude's emergence from this shut-in state: his friendship with Perken and his adventure along the royal way. The second offers the satisfaction of direct action but the first proves more durable. Claude's search for Khmer art becomes in a sense the concrete representation of his attempt to destroy temporarily the relationship between prisoner and master. In a somewhat twisted metaphor, his disengagement of the sculptures from the temple wall with a hammer appears as his own escape from prison. "Disengagement from the forest, the temple, everything . . . a prison wall and, like the work of a file, these hammer blows, constant, constant" (*VR* 85). When the hammer breaks, the escape proves unsuccessful and the prisoner is once again under regulations. "After so much effort, the forest recaptured its prison-powers . . . the stone . . . took on an indestructible life, the life of a mountain: one's glance remained its prisoner" (*VR* 86). Once Claude succeeds in getting the sculptures out, however, the forest and the temple no longer menace him and he feels himself "delivered."

Perken's understanding of destiny as a prison differs somewhat from Claude's. He explains it to the younger man one night

during their journey. "You don't suspect what it is to be a prisoner of your own life . . . you don't know the meaning of a limited, irrefutable destiny that falls on you like a regulation on a prisoner: the certitude that you will be that and not anything else, that you *will have been* that and not anything else" (*VR* 57–58). Whereas Claude's conception of his imprisonment is dominated by the search for a means of liberation, Perken's by now includes finding a way to come to terms with it. He is looking for "peace."

It is difficult to find any rational motivation for Perken's main quest in the novel: his search for Grabot. A rival of Perken's in his career of subduing mountain tribes, he is also no doubt a kind of double. To find out what has happened to Grabot may give some clue as to what will happen to Perken. Known to the reader primarily at second hand, Grabot is substantially an allegorical figure.[5] His story is also one of struggle against destiny but unlike Claude and Perken he has been an actual prisoner. Particularly significant is the means he used to get out. Jailed while a soldier because of a rather childish prank played on a major-doctor, Grabot spread gonorrheal pus in one of his own eyes. The major was punished for not having recognized his "illness" but Grabot lost his eye. Thus Grabot, from the viewpoint of Claude and Perken, has accomplished literally what they are seeking metaphorically: "that temporary destruction of the relationship between prisoner and master."

Grabot is presented as a man able to conquer destiny by sheer force of will—until Claude, Perken, and the reader actually meet him. His importance to the two men is built up to the point that just before finding him they recognize that they are at his mercy. The revelation of Grabot's slavelike condition—he is imprisoned in a dark hut and tied to a millstone—thus comes not only as a surprise but as an intimate threat. Throughout the scene in which Claude and Perken are in Grabot's company, both develop a close and terrifying identification with him suggested at the initial encounter when the blind, almost subhuman figure revolving around his millstone mutters a few words. Perken screams at him in German, "*Was?*" although Grabot is a Frenchman. When Claude points out that Grabot was not speaking German, Perken responds, "No, myself: it is I who . . ." (*VR* 123), indicating perhaps that he believed he was talking to a part of himself. The identification

is made more explicit when he observes Grabot's strange return to the circular motion of his enslaved condition after he has been cut loose: "Perken was plagued by his own countenance, such as it would be, perhaps tomorrow" (*VR* 137). Claude's identification with Grabot is similar, but provokes a more violent reaction. He feels like pulling a trigger on the enslaved creature, "to chase away that proof of his human condition, like the murderer who cuts off his revealing finger" (*VR* 132).

The two imprisonments that Claude and Perken share with Grabot—first in the hut where the latter is attached to the millstone and second in the hut where they are all surrounded by the Moi tribesmen—thus are charged with a significance relating them to the previous symbolic imprisonments. Claude's experience of his ship cabin as a cell ("the atmosphere of the cabin fell down on Claude like the door of a cell") is echoed in his perception of his situation in Grabot's hut by use of the same vocabulary: "The door slammed shut. Cut off by that ray from the cell, the darkness fell down on them" (*VR* 123–25). Whereas the consciousness of imprisonment on shipboard led to a meditation on ways of gaining freedom, the feeling in Grabot's hut incites Claude to sudden, direct action: "He became aware of that prison darkness and threw himself on the door which he opened at once" (*VR* 125).

This first sequence then is Claude's: a topographical re-creation or condensation of his concepts of destiny and combat. It is a sequence reflecting the pattern found in *Les Conquérants:* absurd situation (destiny, imprisonment); consciousness that one cannot live within the absurd; action. The next prison-action sequence is Perken's. The situation in which the three men are surrounded by the tribesmen and their "grill" of pointed lances portrays spatially Perken's idea of destiny. The warriors' circle around their prisoners becomes a magic one: it cuts off everything but itself, placing the men in a direct, bare confrontation with an immediate threat of death or worse, with the fate of Grabot. Malraux's image of time alone living within the circle conveys this vividly.

> Time alone lived, crushing, on that empty space: the minutes were prisoners of that circle of brutes that took on an aspect of eternity as if nothing in the world should happen that could

> go over their heads, as if to live, to undergo the passing of hours . . . was only . . . to understand how this imprisonment was a preparation for slavery. (*VR* 133)

The passive, undiverted experience of time expresses the core of Perken's fear of destiny as *déchéance*. Perken achieves an existential awareness of his situation when he identifies with Grabot as the latter returns from his circular walk, but, in conformity with the sequence pattern, his sense of confinement is followed immediately by the thought, "and yet one could fight" (*VR* 137). Perken's daring and ingenious attempt to liberate himself, Claude, and Grabot represents for him not only a narrow escape from death but also "his liberation from the human state" (*VR* 137).

The statement is one of hubris and is followed as if through a blow from the gods by Perken's fall and concurrent wounding. Still, he achieves an exalting if temporary triumph, one that spurs him on to further attempts to organize Siamese chiefs in defiance of his earlier claim of contentment with erotic experiences and the search for "peace."

Yet Perken's final political effort proves to be unsuccessful as is his last erotic experience. In the end, when he knows he is going to die, his vision turns inward, producing a cluster of similes that recall the lexical and topographical prisons throughout the novel. Buffaloes turn around each other like Grabot in his hut (*VR* 190). A railroad, inaccessible but which might have carried him to a successful operation on his wounded leg, seems to bind him and his former hopes like a "prisoner's chain" (*VR* 190). Smoke coming from the settlement seems to close off the horizon like a "gigantic grill." Perken's previous imprisonments—the memory of Grabot, the circle of tribesmen, the power of the forest and of death itself—become fused in what he experiences as "a superhuman, hopeless imprisonment" (*VR* 190–91). Dying, he is a prisoner in the world of men as if in an underground cave. A final simile recalls Perken's earlier concept of being a prisoner of one's own life: "His whole life was around him, terrible, patient, as the Stiengs had been around the cabin" (*VR* 194). His actions and memories are now separated from, even hostile to, him, now reduced to a mere being about to die. As in the earlier scene, nothing exists within the circle but the naked passing of time. Only now there is no escape, no future possibility. Perken's destiny is

represented in the closed circle of what he has been and the emptiness of the little time remaining.

In the midst of this series of images, just before the final figure of the circle, Malraux introduces an entirely new element. Perken suddenly perceives his physical environment not as a prison but as the very opposite: luminous, unencumbered, infinite space. Anguish before death accordingly gives way to an all-encompassing joy.

> Perken opened his eyes: the sky invaded him, stifling and yet full of joy. . . . He no longer knew anything of men, nothing more even of the earth which was falling down under him with its trees and its animals: he no longer knew anything but that immensity white with light, that tragic joy in which he was losing himself and which the dull beating of his heart was filling little by little. (*VR* 192)

The certainty of immediate death as opposed to the fear of *déchéance* brings with it a peace unknown in the world of men, analagous to affirmation and transcendence in classical tragedy, Oedipus at Colonus. Perken has no objective transcendental order of values with which to ally himself, he does not *accept* his death on those terms, and yet something beyond simple lucidity is involved. A kind of rebirth or dualistic separation reminiscent of Plato's, Boethius's, and Tertullian's examples of freed souls in imprisoned bodies takes place: Perken is said to be "inebriated to flee from his body" (*VR* 193). Within the closed circles, it is suggested, and only there, an utterly new, mystical awareness becomes possible. Like liberation through grace within the Pascalian *cachot* it involves liberation from the self: unlike Pascal's prison-freedom antithesis Perken's experience is based on values created by the self alone. Claude, too, shares in the transcendence of self as Perken's death leaves him with "that desperate fraternity that threw him out of himself" (*VR* 195).

The theme of a paradoxical liberation or self-transcendence within prison and before imminent death, coupled with the sentiment of fraternity, was to be developed much more fully in *La Condition humaine*. In *La Voie royale* the dominant figure is the simile and the topographical prisons seem at times mere illustrations of the lexical ones, extensions of the simile. The comparison of Claude's hammering at the statues on the temple to a prisoner's

filing through the wall of his cell is justified solely by the abstract concept of destiny as imprisonment. Even the engrossing narrative of Perken's affront to the circle of warriors reads at times like an awkward juxtaposition of thriller and allegory. In contrast, the justly famous prison scene in *La Condition humaine* successfully fuses poetic statement with narrative function.

A few prison metaphors appear in *La Condition humaine*, but lexical prisons no longer have the importance they had in *La Voie royale*. In preparation for the climactic scene that gives the novel its Pascalian title, where the captive Shanghai insurrectionists await their execution at the hands of Chiang Kai-shek's forces, Malraux informs the reader that the scene's two protagonists, Kyo and Katow, each have a previous formative prison experience behind them. Katow served five years in a convict prison for trying to blow up the gate of the prison in Odessa. Thus he already has viewed prisoners as comrades to work with and to liberate. He even voluntarily left a moderate prison to accompany some of his less fortunate fellows to the lead mines. Kyo seems to interpret this action when he remarks that Katow would go to a prison camp not for the sake of another individual but "for the idea that he has of life, of himself" (*CH* 62). Kyo and his wife May, on the other hand, discuss the possibility of going to prison for each other. The difference is symptomatic and will be developed fully when the two are imprisoned together.

Kyo's initiation into prison life is not presented as a background reference like Katow's but rather as a kind of individual prelude to the collective schoolyard scene. The reader experiences the world of the common-law prison where Kyo is briefly interned entirely from the latter's point of view. Nowhere in *La Condition humaine*, except in the opening scene with Tchen, do we enter into the subjective world of one character for such a long stretch of time. Several pages are spent describing the "atmosphere"—the sights, smells, and sounds of the prison—yet the effect is far from realistic. The reader does not really look out at the prison and its occupants from Kyo's vantage point; he or she looks into Kyo by means of them. During Kyo's interrogation by Chiang Kai-shek's police chief, König, the essence of the prison ordeal is described by indirect discourse: "he had just discovered how exhausting it is to be constrained to take refuge entirely in one's self" (*CH* 342). The statement is inaccurate from a realistic viewpoint; Kyo has

not been in solitary confinement but constantly in the company of other prisoners. Yet the experience we have witnessed is indeed one of utter isolation and of an alienation intensified by the physical presence but psychological distance of others.

The primary metaphors used to describe the prison and its inhabitants are taken from the animal world. The prison is called a "stable" and a "den," the prisoners are lodged in "wooden cages" and are referred to as "crustaceans" or "giant insects." The first thing Kyo notices on entering is a horrible odor that reminds him of a slaughterhouse or a dog show, in any case of excrement. Into this environment that seems designed for the transformation of men into beasts, Kyo undergoes a kind of descent into hell during which he acquires new knowledge both about himself and about the limits to which human abjection can be pushed.

At the beginning he seems confident in his ability to pass through what is after all a temporary confinement unscathed: "He was resolved not to hear the insults, to withstand everything that could be withstood; the important thing was to get out of there; to take up the struggle again" (*CH* 334). At this point Kyo still is oriented toward the active life but, like Garine, Claude, and Perken, he will discover what it means to be deprived of the ability to act and to be submitted to the mercy of an absurd cruelty. The bestial power of the guardian, a madman's cry, fragments of speech heard from the "shadows" of other prisoners, and a conversation with his cellmate, a former mandarin turned pimp who has "adapted" himself to prison life, create in Kyo a state described as "solitude et humiliation totales" (*CH* 336).

Kyo seems to reach the limits of the endurable when he sees the madman being whipped by the guardian. The madman's question, "How, how, how are you?" has punctuated the account of Kyo's growing anxiety with what seems like an interrogation of hidden parts of himself. His terror before the whipping stems not so much from a feeling of compassion for the helpless, abject creature as from a fear of some latent cruelty, or complicity with abjection, in himself. Watching the suffering madman, he begins to understand: "The baseness and also the susceptibility in each being was called there with the most savage vehemence, and Kyo struggled with all his thought against human ignominy" (*CH* 338). The "dignity" to which Kyo has devoted his life now appears as a quality against the grain of a human nature that draws men to be

either the humiliated or the humiliators. Even the struggle against baseness waged by Kyo here takes on a form hardly compatible with the ideology of a man committed to the struggle against class privilege and private property. Like Perken, he extricates himself from a threatening situation by means of a bribe—his only power over the guard is fifty dollars. Before he can obtain even this triumph, however, he must undergo a kind of initiation into the rites of humiliation. Under the approving gaze of the criminal prisoners (who naturally resent the politicals) Kyo's hands on the bars of his cell are beaten by the guard. When he leaves the prison, Kyo feels that he is leaving behind "a disgusting part of himself" (*une part immonde de lui-même*, *CH* 341).

It is partly because this scene precedes it that the sequence in which Katow, Kyo, and their comrades await their execution while imprisoned in the indoor recreation yard of a school takes on such an exhilarating quality. As the prison experience has been shown to be primarily one of humiliation, the sense of fraternity and human dignity that emerges here must be won with tremendous effort. An orthodox Marxist would have given a clear significance to the contrast between the two scenes. The first prison could represent the fundamental conditions of capitalism: human beings corrupted by a society divided into exploiters and exploited. The second then could represent revolutionary struggle and eventual victory over these conditions: a future Communist society with men fraternal and equal. Some of this political symbolism certainly is contained in Malraux's presentation of the two scenes but they make a statement more complex and ultimately more pessimistic. The extremes of humiliation and dignity are not entirely products of social systems but poles of the human condition. It is the revolutionary dedication and fraternity of the Shanghai insurrectionists rather than the bureaucratic skills of Vologuine (through whose fault, in fact, they are in prison) that create the values that foster dignity. The prison, in which man's fate is revealed in its barest and most extreme form, may bring out either pole. Dignity, as Kyo learned in prison and expressed to König, is simply the opposite of humiliation, but it is perhaps necessary to have known humiliation in order to create dignity.

The collective prison scene is sometimes Kyo's experience, sometimes Katow's, sometimes both of theirs. It seems to divide itself into five parts. The first section gives an impression of the

group as a collectivity, the second focuses on Katow and Kyo conversing together, the third, in which the prisoners watch the guards call for one after another of their number to be executed, is essentially Malraux's rendition of Pascal's image of the human condition. In the fourth, which might be called "the passion of Kyo," we enter once again into this prisoner's subjective world. The fifth, the passion of Katow, recounts his struggle against and triumph over solitude. Stylistic variations within the passage are very wide. The narrative account of death and defeat are transformed into a kind of victory through poetry.[6]

It is important that the viewpoint in the first few pages of the scene is that of Katow. He has not just been through the harrowing, isolating experience of Kyo; he is able immediately to establish contact with the other prisoners, even to feel what they are feeling. Thus a *collective* hunger and thirst are expressed, a picture of men waiting together is drawn, a sense of solidarity established. Still, something hangs overhead. The quality that makes human beings human, elsewhere defined as dignity, is threatened. Katow recognizes it: "there was fright—not fear, terror, that of beasts, of men alone before the inhuman" (*CH* 355). The sense of terror is reinforced by the coming and going of the guards, by a display of power and submission. The prisoners in the school are menaced with, but have not yet succumbed to, the abjection of those in the prison.

With the entrance of Kyo, the collective scene switches to a private one, as if by a zooming in of the camera lens. When Kyo finds Katow, he finds the first person with whom he can actually communicate since his imprisonment. Friendship, under these circumstances, in the face of death, takes on an almost superhuman quality: "absolute friendship, unexamined and without reticence" (*CH* 358). The difference between Kyo and Katow is stressed by the fact that Kyo must pass through a personal communication in order to obtain a sense of solidarity with the others. Seeing Katow among the other prisoners, Kyo gradually widens his view: "a condemned life landed against his own in the shade full of threats and wounds, among all these brothers in the begging order of the Revolution: each one of these men had passionately seized in passing the only dignity that could be his" (*CH* 359).

The concept of the revolutionaries as friars or monks will be extended in the "passion of Kyo" sequence. First, however, Kyo

and Katow witness an enactment of Pascal's image: a guard comes for the first prisoner to be executed and comes back five minutes later calling for the second. Each prisoner thus is exposed to a vision of his own fate. In the separation of Lou-You-Shen from his friend, Kyo sees a demonstration of the strength of fraternity before death and the horror of isolation.

Malraux thus has posed essentially the same existential question as Pascal, How is man to react when the bare facts of the human condition are before him? Throughout the novel, the major characters have used various means to attempt to escape knowledge of their fate. In prison, however, where no escape is possible and death is imminent, the only means of liberation is transcendence. Elaborating on Perken's mystical experience, Malraux here introduces a cluster of metaphors that are primarily Christian in origin.

The principal metaphor, one that Malraux will use increasingly in later works in connection with the prison, is that of death and resurrection. When the focus is again on Kyo, we see him lying down, his arms crossed over his chest in a trancelike state compared to death (*CH* 360). The outer reality of the prison gradually disappears, the reader is immersed in Kyo's memories and thoughts, the style becomes increasingly lyrical, objective time stops. Yet it is just at the point of extreme inwardness—during Kyo's meditation on May—that a shift is made suddenly from the inner world to the outer, from timelessness to history, and the style changes from nostalgic lyricism to triumphant rhetoric. The abrupt shift can be seen in the following passage:

> O prison, place where time, continuing elsewhere, stops . . . No! It was in this schoolyard separated from everyone by machine guns that the revolution, whatever its fate, whatever the place of its resurrection, would have received its death blow; wherever men work in pain, absurdity, and humiliation, they would think of condemned men similar to these as believers pray. (*CH* 361)

Kyo's "No!" is a refusal of solitary, meaningless death. He awakens out of a deathlike state to rejoin his comrades in spirit, to realize fully how the significance of his own life and death is attached to theirs and their cause. While his "resurrection" is, objectively speaking, only a prelude to his suicide it becomes linked poetically to the resurrection of the revolution, thus to a kind of faith in an

afterlife on earth. If the revolution is dying in prison, it will live again through the prayers of the faithful for their saints. Thus a second religious metaphor is introduced. It had been suggested when Kyo compared the prisoners to mendicant friars. He now calls them "martyrs," "legends," "sacrificed suffering," and "human sacrifice." Members of a monastic order or saints persecuted for their faith, the captive revolutionaries have risen to the level of a spiritual elect whose examples will help other "prisoners" (those who work in suffering, humiliation, and absurdity, the themes associated with prison) to transcend their fate. If factories are to become the revolution's cathedrals, as Hemmelrich predicts, prisons, it would seem, are already its monasteries.

Katow's "passion," like Kyo's, follows the pattern that Malraux observed in the "prison" literature of writers like Defoe and Dostoyevski—the conquest of isolation. After Kyo's death, thrown back into solitude, Katow must find a way to transcend a terrifying perception of the human condition. Also like Kyo, Katow undergoes a sudden transformation. Yet whereas Kyo's "no" indicated a change in attitude or rather in his vision of the prison and its significance for the human condition, the turning point for Katow involves a conscious decision and an act. Kyo's decision to take his cyanide had been made earlier; it is his understanding of the act that is important. Katow, on the other hand, changes his course of action in an effort to be "stronger than solitude." Kyo's transformation is of a mystical order. Katow's is on the order of charity.

The metaphor of death and resurrection reappears, if somewhat more obliquely, in the intense passage in which Katow passes his cyanide, giving "more than his life" to his two comrades. The loss of the capsules in the dark is like a relapse into deathlike solitude, redeemed first by the gesture of the fraternal hand that grasps Katow's and finally, completely, by the recovery of the cyanide, signaled by the phrase, "O résurrection!" (*CH* 366). Katow's exit from prison to his execution, his shadow larger than life, the rhythm of his walk followed lovingly by the other prisoners, is itself a kind of resurrection. As with Kyo, the prelude to death is, poetically speaking, a triumph.

The prison scene as a whole has a circular structure since the ending returns to the collective feelings expressed in the introductory paragraph. Yet these feelings too have been transformed. The threat of being reduced to an inhuman state is gone; the pris-

oners in the schoolyard have surpassed the condition of those in other prisons. Katow, crystallizing their individual and collective emotions, seems to save them. They regard their condition lucidly, thus with anguish and fear, but no longer with bestial terror. Kyo's vision and Katow's act, in different ways, have given spiritual solidarity to the "saints" and "friars" of the revolution. This scene in *La Condition humaine* represents a state of almost perfect equilibrium in the development of Malraux's spatial and metaphorical prisons. Action and vision, the two forms of resistance to imprisonment explored sporadically and sometimes awkwardly in *Les Conquérants* and *La Voie royale*, here are orchestrated symmetrically. Also portrayed in a state of tense balance are the two poles of the prison experience: metaphysical absurdity and social degradation against personal transcendence and triumph. It should be stressed that these are not sequential but congruent. In no way do Kyo's and Katow's transcending experiences negate the reality of the prison; in fact they are not possible without the knowledge of that reality. Such is the nature of the paradox.

Malraux's next novel, *Le Temps du mépris*, over half of which takes place in a prison cell, can be seen as an extended development of the prison scene in *La Condition humaine*. The Communist hero Kassner, who spends nine days in a Nazi concentration camp for political prisoners, combines Kyo's nightmarish experience of humiliation in the common law prison and his trancelike self-searching in the schoolyard with Katow's resurrection through comradeship. The main difference lies in the treatment: the images are more complex and numerous, the shifting states of mind more closely depicted. Perhaps Malraux felt that the psychological complexity and the symbolic value of the prison experience would lend itself to an entire short novel. Then, too, contemporary events had begun to catch up with artistic intuition.

Malraux's primary interest in writing *Le Temps du mépris* was clearly not to compile a documentary on the little that was known about German concentration camps in 1935, although he was acquainted with some of the first rumors and reports on their existence. Many of the early camps for political prisoners, unlike the concentration camps of the forties, were in fact located in former state prisons not unlike the one described in Malraux's novel. *Le Temps du mépris* is dedicated to the "German comrades who wanted me to make known what they had suffered and what

they had upheld." Cecil Jenkins, in his book on Malraux, suggests that the imprisonment of the German writer Ludwig Renn may have influenced the composition of *Le Temps du mépris*,[7] while Robert Payne in his biography suggests Gustav Regler as a possible model.[8] The underground isolation cell, the darkness, the threat of madness, and the support given by the tapping from neighboring cells—seen by some critics as products of Malraux's imagination[9]—bear a striking resemblance to corresponding details in Willi Bredel's account of his incarceration in one of the camps of the early thirties.[10]

Malraux's political convictions, closer at this time than at any other to orthodox communism, are an obvious source of inspiration in *Le Temps du mépris*. The novel has been called Malraux's attempt to write propaganda and is dismissed by most non-Marxist critics as a failure for this reason. It is true that the Communist party upholds all of the positive values portrayed in the text and that Kassner is a model of proletarian virtue. Yet in the extensive treatment of the prison experience the official lessons are constantly undermined by metaphor.

A development of the themes associated with the prison in *La Condition humaine*, a revelation of the beginnings of a contemporary phenomenon and a Marxist tract, *Le Temps du mépris* also harks back to a much earlier Malraux: the author of *Le Royaume farfelu* (*The Kingdom of Farfelu*). It evokes too the prison-dream relationship as it exists in the romantic tradition and in the writings of war-prison inmates. Kassner's colorful, fantastic visions in his cell are explorations of a world that has little to do with the revolution. The topography of the novel allows Malraux to explore both old obsessions and newer ideology. The result is a somewhat unsettling combination of a didactic and documentary framework with a largely surrealistic content.

The first five chapters of the book follow Kassner from his first interrogation in prison (and, in flashback, to his arrest), through his imprisonment to his liberation. Very little actually happens. Since Kassner has practically no contact with others most of the novel takes place in silence. The description of Kassner's actual arrest is less reminiscent of any political prisoner's experience than of that strangest and yet most real of fictional arrests, that of Josef K. Like a Kafkaesque ritual too is Kassner's procession between two silent but brutal guards through corridors and

corridors into "a rather large dark hole" (*TM* 31).

Kassner's story is, once again like those of Malraux's "prison" heroes Robinson Crusoe, Don Quixote, and Prince Mishkin, that of a gradual, total descent into solitude and a reemergence into the world of human beings. The "hole" turns out to be the first of two cells that he will inhabit. Here he is still in contact with the outside world through the inscriptions on the walls made by other prisoners, the human sounds he hears, and even the beating he undergoes at the hands of the guards. Like Kyo, he is initiated into humiliation on hearing a prisoner tortured. He becomes aware of how much more intense is torture in a closed place than torture outside. His anguish is, like that of Malraux's other prisoners, that of a man facing the unknown and the inhuman. He feels the indignity of being dependent on his "masters," like an animal in a cage. Yet when the masters actually appear, courage replaces anguish. It is easier to face petty human cruelty than an unknown sadistic force. When the SA guards come in to beat and kick him, his response is one of dignity.

After the beating, Kassner is transferred to a second cell and it is here that he begins the descent into himself. He is utterly alone. His first sensation, once the door is closed, is of being protected.

> That door that was crushing him protected him from the abjection outside; and, at the same time, the solitude, the bareness, and the end of his swoon brought him back to that uneasy intimacy that he had known in his childhood, when he played Indian under the tables. He felt only relief. (*TM* 44)

Kassner conveys this feeling of protection, along with a developing solipsism, by the invention of a metaphor: the cell as carapace (*TM* 45).

Imprisoned more and more in a solipsistic world, the prisoner must wage a struggle against the very real temptation to adapt himself, to live entirely within that world. He fears, and is fascinated by, the two subjective prisons of *La Voie royale:* blindness and madness. Like Perken and Claude, he is initiated through imprisonment into the quasi-magic world of the circle. He finds himself mechanically turning around in his cell like a horse and then uses this as a kind of magic trick to find out if his wife is alive or

dead. As in *La Voie royale* the circle is associated with the stoppage of time or with the assimilation of linear time into subjective time.[11] Roundness is seen as a mental as well as a physical quality: "Kassner's mind turned in the thought of escape like his body in the cell" (*TM* 70). Kassner tells himself with fear that condemned prisoners in round cells with nothing to fix their gaze on always go mad (*TM* 46).

Kassner's struggle against adaptation involves an effort to break out of the magic circle, to recapture, mentally at least, the linear time of the world of action. He finds two weapons at his disposal: music and memory. Yet these do not lead him where he expects. Rather than helping him to break out of the magic circle, they transform prison-time into something beyond madness—into a kind of poetry by which individual past life becomes eternalized, "where music perpetuated the past by delivering it from time" (*TM* 55). Comparable to Kyo's solitary meditation in the school yard, the experience is a kind of death. Like Kyo, Kassner lies down on the cell floor and crosses his hands over his chest in the position of a corpse. Malraux then begins a long variation of the death and resurrection theme introduced in *La Condition humaine*. Suspending the temporal flow of his narrative, Malraux adopts a surrealistic mode to explore Kassner's inner world spatially. Kassner's Promethean vision of a vulture attacking him in his cell as well as the inner music he hears are comparable to Blaise Cendrars's use of the same images during one of the imprisonments of his strange hero Moravagine.[12] The sumptuous, exotic images that float through Kassner's mind from his past in the Gobi desert, in Mongolia and Russia, recall more than any of Malraux's other writings the style of his early *Le Royaume farfelu*. The images that possess Kassner—blood-spattered sunflowers, roses resembling dead butterflies, corpses on the Yangtze—are accompanied by an inner funeral dirge and offer all the romantic enticements of death.

The world into which Kassner is thus transported is an anarchical, destructive, but appealing one. This inner kingdom of *farfelu*, a threshold to madness, represents a temptation as well as a threat. Kassner must struggle against this temptation just as he must struggle against potential humiliation at the hands of his jailers. Yet the prison that has brought on this "death" also makes possible a "resurrection." The timeless world discovered by Kassner is transformed gradually into a triumphant vision of eternity.

> Beyond the cell, beyond time, there existed a world victorious over pain itself, a twilight swept clear of primitive emotions where everything that had been his life glided with the invincible movement of planets in an eternal peace. (*TM* 56)

Following this vision, Kassner actually gets up and his internal imagery evolves toward an epic affirmation of life. Like Kyo's, his resurrection is accomplished by a sudden perception of his comrades in the struggle for the revolution and of the link binding him to them. Surrealistic visions give way to socialist rhetoric as the "Internationale" replaces the funeral hymns in Kassner's mind and the death-kingdom of *farfelu* seems to recede. But we are only in the second chapter of the novel. The death and resurrection movement that marked the culminating point of Kyo's life and, in a sense, of *La Condition humaine*, is here a mere prelude. Kyo's poetic "resurrection" is consummated, as it must be, by his actual death; Kassner anticlimactically returns from the liberating, visionary experience made possible by imprisonment to face its more ordinary attributes. The starry sky that bore his vision of eternity now becomes a mere extension of the prison.

> The stars would always pass in those same places in that sky spangled with fatality, and forever those captive heavenly bodies would turn in their captive immensity, like the prisoners in this courtyard, like him in his cell. (*TM* 60)

The eternal recurrence (like the everlasting soup) of prison life is here extended into a metaphysical principle. The cessation of time and withdrawal into the self that seemed to offer a paradoxical escape beyond his cell now reveal to the prisoner his condition within a series of circles. In contrast to Kyo, Kassner is unable to liberate himself by a poetic vision. He is now faced with essentially the same problem as before.

At this point the event that will in fact free Kassner from his solipsistic world, the tapping on his wall, is introduced, but is seen only as a false hope. In the third chapter Kassner comes closest to actual madness. It is the only part of the book in which he is entirely alone. His efforts are directed toward ordering his hallucinations yet visions of the past intermingle with the present. St. Basil's church, for example, is seen as a "convent-fortress" and then as his own prison. Music, no longer an instrument of deliverance, be-

comes a monotonous plainchant sung by a procession of orthodox priests. Into his stagnant visions, Kassner tries to introduce the memory of battle, of action. But attempts to structure his visions are not enough to save him from the power of the prison. His only defense against madness seems to be the possibility of eventual suicide. In the interim, he is left to experience the eternal present of prison time in all its horror: "The next hour would be the same as this one; the thousand muffled sounds murmuring beneath the silence of the prison would repeat to infinity their burdened insect lives" (*TM* 85). The prisoner is left to stagnate within his circle.

In the fourth chapter, a rope to untangle (work for madmen) challenges Kassner with a temptation to insanity but also reminds him that he is not alone: other prisoners are thinking the same thoughts. It is at this moment that the prisoner in the neighboring cell begins his tapping and in effect rescues Kassner from his utter solitude. Bringing Kassner out of his surrealist visions and romantic wishes and back to socialist awareness, the tapping signals a switch from a spatial to a temporal narrative mode.

Geoffrey Hartmann has pointed out that in the concluding chapters of *Le Temps du mépris* Malraux for the first time portrays a "survivor," one who has gone through a deathlike, hellish experience and returned to the world of men.[13] The death and resurrection theme poetically treated in chapter 2 now takes on a rhythm encompassing the novel's entire structure. It also marks a new direction from *La Condition humaine*. In the cases of Kyo and Katow, "resurrection" within the prison was a heightened introduction to tragic death; for Kassner it is a re-beginning in life. This is a much more awkward theme to handle and it is partly for this reason that *Le Temps du mépris* is less aesthetically satisfying than its predecessor. One suspects that Malraux did not quite know what to do with Kassner after his liberation.

Before treating the resurrection theme directly, Malraux radically alters his narrative to try his hand at an adventure episode. Kassner's thriller flight from Germany to Czechoslovakia bears little relation to the rest of the novel, although it gives Kassner time to experience a strange sort of suspended freedom, far from the earth and its "cells" (*TM* 134). When he returns to the earth, Kassner must go through a Rip van Winkle-like experience of rediscovering it, which means discovering that it is not a prison. He experiences directly the implications of Kyo's poetic apostrophe

("O prison, place where time, continuing elsewhere, stops") as he walks through Prague, observing the simple events of everyday life. The window of a clock shop shows him that normal, chronological time had gone on without him: "hours . . . of those without cells" (*TM* 150).

When he attends the antifascism meeting, Kassner encounters the revolutionary solidarity envisioned by Kyo and his reunion with Anna is comparable to Kyo's meditation on May. Thus Kassner's "resurrection" is a living-out of Kyo's moment of tragic transcendence. Kyo and Katow transcend the prison but are swallowed up by it; Kassner survives it. The ending of the novel celebrates a triumph not of tragedy as in *La Condition humaine* but of the continuity and splendor of life. Yet Kassner's future remains uncertain and the propagandistic rhetoric of the novel remains in the reader's mind subverted by Kassner's inner experience. The prison paradox in any case remains intact: resurrection is made possible only by death; the understanding of freedom only by prior submission to imprisonment.

Malraux will return to the death and resurrection theme with his exploration of the prison-camp world in *Les Noyers d'Altenburg*. In the interim, he radically changes topography to a vast arena encompassing all the battlefields of Spain in *L'Espoir*. The prison as setting is almost absent from the novel except for Malraux's portrayal of the imprisonment of the one character to whom he accords a focus comparable to that in the earlier novels, Captain Hernandez.

Malraux's depiction of Hernandez's brief imprisonment is less graphic than the prison scenes in the previous novels. The image of the circle, this time in the prisoners' daily round in the courtyard, returns, but on the whole details of prison life are few and the prisoner's inner life is barely analyzed. The death and resurrection metaphor is absent. The only real indication of Hernandez's thoughts comes from a drawing found in his wallet that suggests to him a major Malraux theme: "The tragedy of death lies in the fact that it transforms life into destiny, that after it nothing can be compensated for any longer" (*E* 182). Both Moreno's and Hernandez's imprisonments again recall Pascal's image of the human condition: men waiting while their fellows are taken off to be executed. But the somber, bare, and gripping portrayal of the prisoners' march to their execution here has nothing of the apocalyptic

tone of the comparable scene in *La Condition humaine*. Hernandez is not assured of a kind of immortality or of the resurrection of the revolution. He simply meets his own destiny in the fullest and most lucid way possible. He is last seen stepping up to be shot after three of his comrades have died giving the revolutionary salute.

Yet Hernandez's experience is linked to the revolution that continues without him. Because of his example, Moreno does not succumb to the nihilism with which his own prison experience tempted him—he continues to fight rather than escape to France. In addition, the prison theme is linked intimately to what is for Malraux the ultimate value of revolution. The anarchist Le Négus expresses it:

> When men come out of prison, nine times out of ten, they can't fix their gaze any more. They don't look you straight in the eye, like men. Among the proletariat, too, there are many who can't look straight. And we have to change that, for a start. (*E* 146)

The experience of imprisonment thus becomes a kind of quintessence of that humiliation that men impose on each other by economic and social oppression. Yet for the major characters of *L'Espoir*, economic emancipation is not sufficient in itself. The opposite of humiliation, concludes a character obviously speaking for Malraux, is not equality but fraternity. Unlike the other novels, *L'Espoir* is unambivalent in its use of prison as a symbol of social oppression. The statement of the book is clear: it is fraternity that ultimately will liberate men from their various prisons.

In the fragment of the never-completed *La Lutte avec l'ange*, *Les Noyers d'Altenburg*, Malraux returns to paradoxical prisons. *Les Noyers* is in one sense the most structured of Malraux's works, framed as it is by the scenes in the Chartres prison camp where the major themes are stated. In another sense it is indeed a fragment. Encompassing as it does (in less than three hundred pages) both world wars, a colloquium of intellectuals on the nature of man, and three generations of family history, it necessarily leaves many loose ends. Still, it is the prison experience that gives meaning and unity to the varied events in this work in which Malraux makes his most mature statement on his long-standing preoccupation with imprisonment and its relation to human destiny.

The book itself, if we take it as the memoirs of the narrator

Berger written in his prison camp rather than the novel of André Malraux, is testimony to man's capacity to struggle against and overcome the forces of imprisonment. The theme is somewhat underdeveloped, but Berger does mention that he is a writer and the statement about the internees fervently writing their letters home, "Here, writing is the only way to continue to live" (*NA* 30), must be interpreted to refer to literary creation as well as human communication. Yet Malraux, in portraying the human and intellectual development of the Bergers, goes to some length to point out the insufficiencies of art, *in itself*, as an answer to man's fundamental questions. In the struggle to overcome the basic fear of human nothingness or insignificance, represented on several levels in *Les Noyers*, the work of art is more a means than an end. Writing must be precisely a way of continuing to live and not a devaluation of life.

The prologue, set in a prison camp first in the Chartres cathedral and then in a nearby field, sets the tone for the entire work. Reflecting his recent experience, Malraux here more than elsewhere gives a realistic portrayal of prisoners and prison life. The narrator describes bandages being changed, fundamentals of daily living being arranged, and, most remarkably, something of the animal-like behavior found in the concentration camps: men scraping the ground and fighting with each other over bits of bread. Yet the prisoners are depicted more as a group than as individuals and, as the narrative continues, more and more as eternal human types.

Captivity often is perceived as a kind of death. The prisoners stare at the barbed wire thinking, "beyond, there's the country of the living" (*NA* 22). A deathlike isolation becomes more marked after the prisoners find the letters to their families, carefully written according to their captors' instructions, blowing in the wind, lost. The impossibility of communication cuts them off from the world of the living even more brutally than the barbed wires. At this point the narrator describes them as taking on an "eternal" or "gothic" quality. Their faces resemble those of medieval peasants and beyond—permanent qualities of the human race. In their misery and isolation they are living out "the age-old memory of the plague" (*NA* 25). Yet while enduring they are, in a not less time-honored fashion, resisting:

> Beneath that age-old familiarity with misfortune, germinates the no less age-old guile of man, his hidden faith in a patience

> nevertheless replete with disasters, the same patience perhaps as that facing the famine of the caves. (*NA* 26)

The faith in human ingenuity in the face of disaster allows the prisoners once again to take up their pens and write. Bent over, they resemble Peruvian mummies; the gesture of writing, their resistance to death-in-life, links them to the permanent or eternal qualities of man expressed through art. Writing here is an expression not primarily of individuality but of solidarity—with the other inmates, with those outside the barbed wires, and, unconsciously, with past civilizations. The human types that the writer Berger recreates with his own style bring home to him the "lesson" of captivity expressed in a sentence of his father's: "It is not by continuously scratching the individual that one succeeds in finding man" (*NA* 29). "Rencontres avec l'homme" is the title of Vincent Berger's unedited memoirs that the young Berger begins to read and *rencontrer l'homme* describes the task set by the entire book. Captivity here frees the individual from isolation within the self. Writing, as a form of both human communication and artistic creation, emerges from the death world of the prison camp as an affirmation of life.

In addition to the camp, there are several other spaces in the novel that may be considered topographical prisons, both cellular and collective. Each of these is depicted together with a counter-image representing some kind of opening, usually with a view of the sky or other free space. These counterspaces correspond roughly to the two polar themes around which the novel revolves.

The first of these themes, which might be called the threat of annihilation, is defined intellectually by the ethnologist Möllberg at the old convent of Altenburg within Walter Berger's cell-like office. Möllberg, whose arguments seem to defeat those of his opponents at the colloquium, contends that there is no continuity between civilizations, and thus that all human efforts are doomed to oblivion. The theme is portrayed in more immediate ways by the suicide of Dietrich Berger, the narrator's grandfather, by the World War I gas battle scene, by the trapped tank in the World War II scene, and by the prison camp itself. The sense of a continuous or indestructible quality of life and the ideas of victory over death or annihilation and of art as a negation of man's insignificance comprise the second theme, which is expressed intuitively or poetically rather than intellectually or dramatically. It is seen in the image that gives

the book its title, the walnut trees at Altenburg, in Vincent Berger's vision from his father's death chamber, in the spontaneous action of the German soldiers to save their Russian victims in the gas war, in the narrator's escape from the tank trap, and in his writings from the prison camp. The two themes have an obvious Pascalian resonance: *misère et grandeur de l'homme.*

Most of the narrative is devoted to Vincent Berger, the narrator's father, and most of the polar images are in fact accounts of Vincent's experiences juxtaposed with his intuitions or visions. The contrast between his intellectual understanding of Möllberg's theories and his poetic understanding of their opposite in the walnut trees has been much discussed. Rarely mentioned is a similar juxtaposition that precedes and foreshadows this. It occurs in flashback, during a conversation with his uncle Walter, in which Vincent recalls being alone in the room where his father had committed suicide. He was for a while as if in the presence of death: "the lights were still on, as if no one—not even he—would have dared to chase away death by drawing the curtains" (*NA* 90). Vincent thus achieves a certain triumph by performing this simple act. From the window he perceives an ordinary scene of green summer leaves and people going about their morning tasks but it appears to him as a revelation:

> And from the simple presence of people hurrying by there in the morning sunlight, as similar and as different as leaves, a secret, which did not come only from death still crouched behind his back, seemed to arise; a secret which would not have been less poignant if man had been immortal. (*NA* 93)

The image of people as leaves relates this vision of Vincent's to the later one of the continuity of life in the Altenburg trees. The secret that Vincent intuits here will be revealed more fully, though never concisely defined, by each successive "opening" image standing as a contrast to and a triumph over a "prison."

Walter Berger's response to this, his own experience of the same feeling, comes in the form of an anecdote about Nietzsche, someone he once counted as a friend. Walter was in Turin when he learned that Nietzsche had gone mad and accompanied him on a train to Basel. As the train went through a tunnel and the coach was immersed in darkness, Walter feared a crisis. Yet what emerges from the mad Nietzsche in the dark train was a "sublime" song—

his poem "Venice" set to his own music. It was, to Walter, "simply life," the same secret that was revealed to Vincent through the open window. In attempting to explain himself more fully, Walter compares the train compartment to Pascal's prison:

> In the prison of which Pascal speaks, men have managed to bring out of themselves an answer which invades, if I may say so, with immortality, those who are worthy of it. And in that railroad car . . . the millennia of the starry sky seemed to me as eclipsed by man as our poor destinies are eclipsed by the starry sky. (*NA* 97)

The response of Vincent and the response of Nietzsche are, however, two very different forms of resisting the threat of futility. It is perhaps significant that the poem chosen by Malraux for this anecdote is a lyric of inwardness and isolation. Here is the last stanza:

Meine Seele, ein Saitenspiel,	My soul, a lyre,
sang sich, unsichtbar berührt,	invisibly moved,
heimlich ein Gondellied dazu	secretly sang itself a
zitternd vor bunter Seligkeit.	gondola-song,
—Hörte jemand ihr zu?[14]	trembling with bright joy.
	—was anyone listening?

Although the poet questions whether or not anyone can hear the song sung in secret by his soul, he fashions with it a work of art. Perhaps this is why, for Walter Berger, the essence of man lies in what is hidden within himself. For Vincent, man is what he *does*. The "secret" of life that he found in the scene outside his father's window and in the walnut trees was above all in something outside himself, beyond any individual. The two basic types of resistance to the menace represented by imprisonment are stated here: one is artistic creation, the other an insight into the quintessence of life or, as it is called later, "fundamental man." The anecdote told by the art historian Stieglitz at the colloquium on the writers who "resist," who can be read in prison—Defoe, Cervantes, Dostoyevski—belongs to the former category.

The war experiences of Vincent Berger and his son are in part offered as counterweights to the theories of salvation by art and universal relativism proposed at Altenburg. War seen from the trench and war seen from the tank recall Dietrich Berger's death

chamber at Reichbach. The trench in which Vincent Berger waits and the tank in which his son is trapped are dark, enclosed places where the threat of death is a present reality. The difference lies in the fact that they are inhabited by other very real human beings, that the dimension of fraternity is added. Both, like the room, have openings onto the outside world that do not offer escape but which do permit a vision opposed to the experience of confinement. In the trench these are the observation holes through which Vincent perceives once again, this time in a migration of birds, the continuity of life in juxtaposition to the presentiment of death:

> The birds glided above, and my father heard coming out of the thick darkness the voice of the only species that has learned—and learned so badly—that it can die. (*NA* 202)

This time, the feeling of being confined in the presence of death is only a prelude to a real contact with dead and dying men. The faces of the gassed Russians prompt their German enemies to a chaotic and largely futile attempt to save them. Participating in this struggle against what seems a kind of universal destruction, Vincent Bereger discovers that he is motivated by a sentiment of anguish mingled with fraternity. Participation gives substance to the visions at Reichbach and Altenburg, providing a fragile link between the knowledge of death and the intuition of constantly regenerating life.

The final scene of the book, the World War II tank battle in which the young Berger in a sense relives his father's war experience, contains a more obvious image of imprisonment. It is preceded by an interlude in the present—the first since the opening scene—in which the narrator, still in his prison camp, continues his meditation on writing. Writing his thoughts and experiences and linking them with his father's now takes on a new urgency. A central paragraph here, bringing together some of the basic themes of the book, connects some of the dialogue at Altenburg and the experiences of Vincent Berger with the experience the narrator is about to relate. It is worth quoting in its entirety:

> Just as Stieglitz's friend in his prison could only think of the three books that "resisted" shame and solitude, I think only of what resists the fascination of nothingness. And, through each wasted day I am more and more obsessed by the mystery

> which does not oppose, as Walter affirmed, but links, by a barely visible path, the shapeless thoughts of my comrades to the songs that persist before the eternity of the night sky, to the nobility in themselves of which men are unaware—to the victorious part of the only animal that knows he has to die. (*NA* 250)

The two "literary" references to imprisonment from Altenburg—Walter's and Stieglitz's—are recalled here in the context of the real prison. The central question posed by the prison experience, "what resists the fascination of nothingness," is stated in the clearest way possible. Now the task of the narrator is no less than to discover for himself a link between the two forms of resistance: art and survival. The paragraph raises the question, within Pascal's prison, against man's nothingness, how do the songs of a Nietzsche relate to the response of the inarticulate common man?

Malraux, as usual, gives his answer through the poetry of his scenes and images, here almost cinematic in texture. The narrator begins to look back on the nine months before his capture, focusing on a few shots of army life and individualizing the three men who were his tank companions. One brief scene seems to recall, though not entirely successfully, the image of Nietzsche creating a song in the darkened train. When a group of soldiers in their bunks find themselves in the dark because the electricity has gone out, a former bus driver begins to sing "Le P'tit Quinquin," making it into a funeral dirge. As Nietzsche gave expression to his inner isolation through his song, the soldiers seem to find in the singer a voice that gives expression to the misery of war.[15] It is a type of protest and resistance against another form of imprisonment: "and the soldiers asked for verse after verse, as they asked for glass after glass at mess, determined to get drunk in this war that resembles a prison" (*NA* 257).

The scene in which the narrator and his three companions in their armored tank fall into a pit and manage to extract themselves from it is in many ways the most ambitious of the book. It is even less a real battle scene than the World War I episode. The enemy appears as no more than a flash of fire on the horizon; all of the action takes place within the tank or in the trap where it falls. The "enemy" is, in fact, according to the narrator, more the pit than the Germans.

The long episode in the tank before its fall builds up to a point where the few soldiers within are seen, very much like the prisoners in the camp, as alone and cut off from the outside world (*NA* 272). Once in the pit, they are even more isolated and the threat of death (from the artillery that is probably aimed at the trap) becomes a more immediate reality. Poetically speaking, their confinement in the pit is not only an encounter with death but an actual death. "The earth reverberates with the noise of free tanks passing all around our death," observes Berger (*NA* 274). The face of his companion Pradé takes on "the pale solemnity of the dead" (*NA* 279). Malraux plays on the double meaning of *fosse* (ditch, grave) in an image suggesting that the four are sacrificed, dead, and buried: "We are up against the wall of our common ditch (grave)—Berger, Léonard, Bonneau, Pradé,—a single cross" (*NA* 281). Finally as the four companions lay down to sleep following their escape the narrator suggests that they have been and still are dead: "Perhaps we will come back to life tomorrow" (*NA* 285).

Like Kassner's "dark hole," the "grave" in which the four find themselves trapped effects a shift from temporal narration to a spatial mode. The narrator and his companions (like Kassner) become aware of their vulnerability and develop a "carapace"—here the armored tank. The pit with its inaccessible skylight becomes both a literal and metaphorical *cachot:* "we are as if in those cells that are lighted only by an inaccessible skylight: prisoners don't escape through the ceiling" (*NA* 282). Kassner, in his fantasies, envisioned the starry sky both as a symbol of victory over imprisonment and as a superhuman reflection of eternal imprisonment. These prisoners who actually can see the sky again attribute to it a double-edged value: it is the sepulcher of their tomb (*NA* 284) and an indication of the possibility of escape. Trapped in a hole in the earth with no view but of infinity, they find themselves quite literally in the Pascalian prison as it was defined by Walter Berger, "thrown at random between the profusion of matter and that of the stars" (*NA* 99).

Yet these prisoners, through the force of their collective will and ingenuity, emerge victorious. The death and resurrection motif here takes on a new dimension. Resurrection is in this case not merely a poetic triumph or mystical union with the revolution but,

first of all, an actual event. As Berger emerges from the ground, he leaves death and meets regenerating life: "And yet the night that is no longer the sepulcher of the grave (ditch), the living night appears to me like a prodigious gift, like an immense germination" (*NA* 284). Resurrection is here also rebirth. As if participating in a ritual, Berger seems to emerge from the tomb/womb of Mother Earth with an utterly fresh perception of reality.[16]

This imprisonment in fact serves as part of a rite of initiation for the young Berger. More clearly than other Malraux protagonists, Berger emerges from his ordeal transformed, partaking in a new order of knowledge. A clue to the nature of that knowledge may be found in Malraux's interest in shamans, the men of visionary and holy powers found in Siberia and in many archaic cultures. There is much evidence in the text to suggest that Malraux (who considered himself something of a shaman) envisioned Berger father and son as types of modern shamans.

The first indication of Berger shamanism appears when a Russian friend gives the narrator a list of modern European "shamans" and tells him that Vincent Berger's strengths and weaknesses come from the fact that he was something of a shaman himself (*NA* 49). Apparently endowed with visionary power, Berger often acts by virtue of that power. The shaman may undergo a mystical death and return to life several times during the course of his existence. Vincent's return from Turkestan (where he might well have encountered actual shamans) is accompanied by a renewed perception of European life resembling the renewed vision of the "Lazarean man." Malraux's choice of trees as the symbolic heart of Vincent's visionary experience is especially significant in this context for shamans have a special relationship with the "world tree," the symbol for the universe in constant regeneration.[17] Leo Frobenius, whose discussion of shamanism Malraux must have read, defines the shaman by his rebellion against reality and by his use of ego-power,[18] both qualities that could be applied to Vincent Berger as well as to other Malraux heroes. Mircea Eliade defines an essential characteristic of the shaman:

> The shaman stands out by the fact that he has succeeded in integrating into consciousness a considerable number of experiences that, for the profane world, are reserved for dreams, madness, or *ante mortem* states.[19]

The language and concepts of this passage almost seem taken from Malraux. Certainly Vincent Berger's development is characterized precisely by the conscious integration of his visionary experiences into his life.

Shamanism is in many cultures a hereditary state. Vincent's son's encounter with his father's memoirs and the recording of his vision of the prison camp are also attempts to integrate into consciousness experiences that might be reserved for dreams in a profane state. Yet if the right to become a shaman is inherited, the neophyte shaman also must undergo a rite of initiation. To be initiated is to transcend historical time, to relive the sacred beginnings, to participate in the vital myths of the culture. Initiation creates an ontological change: one dies in the profane world to be reborn into the sacred. Thus, as described earlier, the ritual of death and rebirth is of prime importance. In many cultures the initiate is enclosed in a cave (representing both a grave and the womb of Mother Earth) for several days, sometimes tortured or symbolically killed before emerging back onto earth. The experience of rebirth is not only physiological but cosmological. According to Eliade, "It is not the repetition of maternal gestation and physical birth, but a temporary regression to the virtual, precosmic world—symbolized by night and darkness—followed by a rebirth analogous to a 'creation of the world.' "[20] Berger's "burial" and "death" in a hole in the earth, his vision of cosmic night, and his reemergence parallel this pattern of shamanic initiation. So does his experience the following morning. The dawn, in all mythology analogous to the creation of the world (and here also called an *aube biblique*) is assimilated by Berger into his own experience of rebirth.

> But this morning, I am nothing but birth. I still bear within me the irruption of the earthly night upon coming out of the ditch (grave), that germination in the darkness deepened with constellations in the holes of fleeting clouds; and, as I saw that full and rumbling night surge out of the ditch (grave), now rising out of the night comes the miraculous revelation of the day. (*NA* 289–90)

It is significant that the above passage is preceded by a full-length citation from Pascal:

> Let us imagine a large number of men in chains, all condemned to death, some of them slaughtered every day in the sight of the others so that those who remain see their own condition in that of their fellows. . . . This is the image of the human condition. (*NA* 289)

The two polar states represented throughout the book by prisons and openings thus are brought together for the last time. But here Pascal's prison is but a shadow and a memory—the experience of joy, the feeling of oneness with creation is the definite, if temporary victor. Yet the shadow reminds the reader of what has been demonstrated all along. As in the Pascalian antithesis the two states are interdependent. One cannot feel imprisoned without having some idea of an opposite state and, conversely, one must have experienced the threat posed by imprisonment in order to learn what "resists" it. If man's happiness is perhaps "poisoned" as Berger reflects, it is the only happiness possible for him. The tribal shaman must pass through death in order to be able to see into the mysteries of life. The European "shaman" must have an intimate knowledge of human mortality and metaphysical insignificance before being able to intuit the permanent qualities of life. By the end of *Les Noyers d'Altenburg* the narrator has gained in his own right an insight into the mystery of the fundamental unity and continuity of life that lay at the heart of his father's experience. The book written from prison is his testimony to the dual powers of life and art to combat the temptation of nothingness.

Both self-styled prophet and chronicler of fundamental and historical man, Malraux inscribes in his prison fables a sense of the power of those who imprison, along with the feeling of humiliation on the part of the prisoners, that will be realized in the massive wartime incarcerations. At the same time, he renews for the twentieth-century reader the Pascalian tradition of salvation and renewal through descent into solitude and awareness of the limits of the human condition. Malraux's early individualist heroes, Garine, Claude, and Perken, struggle against an imprisoning force portrayed lexically and topographically as a destiny that encloses, liberating themselves first through courage and action and then, with Perken's final moments of tragic transcendence, by the paradoxical, quasi-mystical freedom encountered at the point of most

extreme confinement. The traditional theme of renewal or rebirth following a solitary descent into a death-in-prison haunts Malraux throughout his work. The destinies of Kyo, Kassner, and the Bergers parallel Malraux's view of Robinson Crusoe, Don Quixote, and Prince Mishkin in their struggles with confinement and solitude and their renewals through those struggles. Nor is Malraux insensitive to the attractions of the "happy" prison: the visions of Kyo and Kassner, the illuminations of Perken and Berger are beneficial inner preludes to a "salvation" that can be described only with a religious vocabulary.

Pascal's solitary room, in which the individual fears to face his destiny, would seem to influence Malraux as strongly as the more often quoted collective image of prisoners in chains. The mystical, solitary, and salutary value of confinement in fact appears as a strong undercurrent running counter to the more cerebral and political message Malraux would communicate to his readers: the possibility of triumph over the power of imprisonment through the discovery and assertion of human solidarity or, more accurately, its exclusive form, "virile fraternity." Unresolved in *Le Temps du mépris*, tensions between the two visions appear in equilibrium in *La Condition humaine* and triumphantly fused in *Les Noyers d'Altenburg* where the final descent into hell is an experience at once of solitude and solidarity, of individual death, rebirth, and initiation through the rediscovery of collective action and "fundamental man."

Malraux's representations of political prisons—the Chinese schoolyard, the early German concentration camp, the Spanish jail, the internment camp at Sens—although spaces created by power and evil, imposing humiliation, are still logically if not morally comprehensible and thus engender resistance in the form of human will and action. In this they resemble (or prefigure) more the wartime political prisons or the "prison" of the Occupation than the *univers concentrationnaire*. Malraux's sense of the metaphysical absurd, his version of existential anguish, although certainly present in his prisons, tends to assert itself more in the metaphorical prison spaces: rooms, cabins, caves, trains. Only in one prison does Malraux portray the depths of human solitude and humiliation where no resistance and no solidarity seems possible—in the common law prison where Kyo feels that he leaves behind a "disgusting" (*immonde*) part of himself before he, as it were, graduates

to the political prison. The isolated world of *l'immonde*, the extremes of human degradation feared and mightily resisted by Malraux and his heroes, will become the territory of a writer who experienced them, Jean Genet. The tendency of the cellular space, confining/liberating metaphor of the absurd, to dominate and to "spatialize" its text will increase in the works of Malraux's somewhat younger contemporaries.

3 Sunlit Cells and Closed Worlds

Paradoxical prisons are central to the literary world of another "Pascal sans Christ,"[1] Albert Camus. Camus, designated by Jean Cayrol in 1950 as the writer most able to transpose the *univers concentrationnaire* to a literature of the everyday world,[2] avoids Malraux's near-mystical transcendence in his portrayal of a world limited to humanity and nature. There is little of the shaman in Camus; if the myth of death and resurrection is still present in his prison fables it appears in a very different guise, with revolt overshadowing spiritual awakening. Space in Camus's works tends to be clear, almost two-dimensional. Meursault's prison cell in a tower overlooking the Mediterranean provides a spatial context very different from Kassner's "dark hole." Still Camus shares with Malraux and with the metaphorical prison tradition a portrayal of confining space intimately related to a particular binary vision.

L'envers et l'endroit (the two sides of the coin), North Africa and Europe, light and darkness, yes and no, poverty and splendor, nature and history, passion and asceticism, exile and kingdom, seas and prisons—Camus's work is impregnated with a series of such concepts confronting each other through a process Edouard Morot-Sir has called "la logique de la limite."[3] This logic, one of static alternation rather than of dialectic movement, proceeds by affirmation and negation by means of a revolt declaring the limits beyond which it refuses to go. Such logic, Morot-Sir has shown, generates an aesthetic of limits or of "poverty," a constraint constantly imposed on the flourishing of rhetoric or of lyricism. Camus's figures of confinement, both lexical and topographical, in his essays, fiction, and drama, stand in opposition to openness and unrestricted sensuous beauty but, through their imposition of limits, become the human means through which these

can be perceived. Thus the bare poverty of Belcourt intensifies the beauty of the Algerian evenings, the voluptuousness of Florence is apprehended from a monastic cell in Fiesole, Meursault becomes conscious of his sensual happiness only in prison, the North African perceives the value of the Mediterranean best from his European confinement. Truth is approached through this process of opposition, a process that never attains synthesis but constantly imposes limits. It is those who perceive only one of the binary terms (closed or open) who remain in error. Adopting the Platonic metaphor, Camus describes Paris as an "admirable cave" whose inhabitants have long since acquired the habit of mistaking shadows for reality.[4] Did Camus see himself (as in Sartre's critical view) as the philosopher-savior who, because of his dual knowledge of the cave and the "light," undertakes the liberation of Parisians from their illusions?

This reference to the cave notwithstanding, there is little of the Platonic in Camus. The light behind the cave dwellers is not that of divine truth but of moderate human reason. Recognizing the fact that humanity is imprisoned metaphysically in a world where absolute knowledge is both impossible and desired—a condition he baptizes "absurd"—Camus refuses both the Platonic method for liberating the soul from the senses and the Pascalian (or "existentialist") leap of faith or deciphering of signs of grace on the prison walls. Absolute truth, knowledge, or freedom, for which human beings cannot help retaining a "nostalgia" nonetheless must be banished from the realm of speculation if they intend to function effectively in the world. The Camusian personage must pursue his quest for liberation within the prison, through an awareness of limits, an imposition of *dénuement* (destitution, bareness) that alone will make possible (as in the paradoxical prison tradition) an understanding of freedom.

Lexical prisons and related metaphors permeate Camus's philosophical essays and appear frequently in texts such as *Les Justes* (*The Just*), *La Peste* (*The Plague*), and *La Chute* (*The Fall*), reinforcing the significance of the topographical prisons. Of the latter, three basic types in Camus's fiction and theater may be distinguished: the condemned prisoner's cell (*L'Etranger* [*The Stranger*], *Les Justes, Requiem pour une nonne*); the room in which an individual is "trapped" either by himself or with one or

two others (*Le Malentendu* [*Cross Purpose*], "L'Hôte" ["The Guest"], "La Femme adultère" ["The Adulterous Woman"], and "Jonas ou l'artiste au travail" ["Jonas, or the Artist at Work"]); and the city as self-contained system or what Camus calls in *The Myth of Sisyphus* a "monde clos," a closed world (*La Peste, L'Etat de siège* [*The State of Siege*], *La Chute*, and "Le Renégat" ["The Renegade"]). While imprisonment in the first two types would seem to be primarily individual and in the last one primarily collective, this is not always strictly the case: a collective imprisonment may occur in the cells and rooms, notably in *Les Justes* and "L'Hôte," while individual "cells" are contained within the three closed worlds. An analysis of an example from each type should demonstrate something of the importance and variety of the topographical prison as function and index in Camus's literary works. In the case of the third category, however, the collective "closed world" portrayed in *La Peste* and *L'Etat de siège* is so different from the primarily solipsistic ones created in *La Chute* and "Le Renégat" that it would seem important to discuss one of each subtype. Our analysis therefore will concentrate on *L'Etranger*, *Le Malentendu*, *La Peste*, and *La Chute*.

Before analyzing these texts, it will be helpful to glance at some of the lexical prisons Camus uses in *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* and *L'Homme révolté*. In the first, terms such as "walls," "limits," "barriers," "the path with no exit," "the closed world," and "the shut-in universe" all cluster around the notion of the absurd. The human condition is "to be chained" and "the absurd does not release, it binds" (*S* 113, 149). Given the reality of death and the nonexistence of an afterlife, complete, ontological freedom is impossible and those "existentialist" thinkers (Camus seems to refer primarily to Kierkegaard) who offer a "way out" of the closed human condition are cheating on the absurd. Thus Camus arrives at the paradox that freedom can only be found *within* the limits of a metaphorical prison, not by seeking a way *out* of it.

> The only idea of freedom that I can have is that of the prisoner, or of the modern individual within the State. The only freedom I know is that of the mind and of action. Now if the absurd on one hand destroys all my chances of eternal freedom, on the other it gives back to me and exalts my freedom of action. (*S* 140)

The liberty of the prisoner begins with knowledge, not absolute knowledge but "precise knowledge of the walls surrounding him" (*S* 117). The culmination of this liberty, which Camus calls *libération*, is to be found near the moment of death when one has acquired the capability of feeling "a stranger to his own life" (*S* 142). Reasoning thus, Camus arrives at another paradox: the prisoner sentenced to death is the freest of all.

> The divine availability of the death row prisoner before whom the prison gates open one early dawn, that incredible disinterestedness with regard to everything, except for the pure flame of life, here one can see that death and the absurd are the principles of the only reasonable freedom: one that a human heart can feel and experience. (*S* 142)

Unlike the suicide, the condemned prisoner learns to "live without appeal," another prison term used frequently by Camus. His first and final liberty is shown in his revolt.

Given these premises and this vocabulary, can it be accidental that the chapters devoted to examples of "absurd men" all end with some sort of image of confinement? Camus imagines Don Juan spending his last days as an ascetic in his cell in an isolated monastery, waiting with disdain for the "final end." An old actor might look back on his life and await his death from a retirement home; as for the conqueror, Camus gives the example of the last of the Carraras imprisoned in Padua besieged by the Venetians. Thus the men who have lived exemplary "absurd" lives by their cult of the finite and the perishable in the end wait in confinement, as condemned prisoners, for the absurd injustice of death.

In *L'Homme révolté*, the metaphor is used somewhat differently, for Camus there is concerned less with an attempt at defining freedom within an absurd situation provided by nature than with denouncing various closed systems, metaphysical and political, imposed by the human mind on the world. In Camus's method of mixing biography, historical and contemporary political exempla, and abstract reasoning, "real" prisons tend to become metaphorical and vice versa. In discussing the first of his "metaphysical nihilists," the Marquis de Sade, Camus focuses on the formative influence of imprisonment.

> Twenty-seven years of prison do not, in fact, make for a

> conciliatory mind. Such a long claustration engenders servants or murderers and sometimes, in the same man, both. (*HR* 447)

In prison, Camus goes on to say, imagination has an "awful liberty"; in Sade's case the dream of absolute sexual freedom. The quest for absolute liberty of any sort ends by imposing itself as a closed system on others. Thus Sade's prison metamorphoses into a figure: "An impossible search for escape from despair but which nonetheless finishes in a desperate race from servitude to servitude and from prison to prison" (*HR* 454). The lexical prison returns to a concrete, historical referent as Camus envisions Sade's last days in Charenton.

Another example of this type of metamorphosis can be found in Camus's presentation of Marxism. The recently revealed Soviet concentration camps, of great concern to Camus, appear almost as if inevitably born from a system of metaphors. Camus sees Marx as the "revolutionary" who systematized what was for Nietzsche pure revolt. Whereas Nietzsche's aim was to liberate humanity from a world dominated by the dictates of Christianity (telescoped into the metaphor "the prison of God"), Marx, and especially his followers, strove to re-imprison human beings in the equally closed and servile framework of historical necessity ("the prison of history").

> The great rebel thus creates with his own hands, and in order to shut himself into it, the implacable reign of necessity. Once he has escaped from the prison of God, his first concern is to construct the prison of history and of reason, thus perfecting the camouflage and the consecration of that nihilism that Nietzsche had claimed to conquer. (*HR* 489)

Communism is akin to fascism in that its logic as a "closed system" inevitably creates a hierarchy to judge and punish those who do not fit and conform. The prison of history assumes, as it were, a body.

> To choose history alone is to choose nihilism, contrary to the teachings of revolt itself. Those who throw themselves into history in the name of the irrational, proclaiming it meaningless, encounter servitude and terror and end up in the *univers concentrationnaire*. Those who launch themselves into it

> preaching its absolute rationality encounter servitude and terror, and end up in the *univers concentrationnaire.* (*HR* 648)

L'univers concentrationnaire (also called, after Kafka, "the universe of the trial") can refer to the theoretical frameworks of Marxism and fascism, their political systems, and the actual concentration camps. The latter then appear not as an aberration but as the theory's inevitable form, the concretization of metaphor.

When Camus turns from his denunciation of the various forms of revolution to a discussion of the positive values of nonrevolutionary revolt, he again has recourse to the metaphor of the closed world. Artistic creation, in a sense the purest example of revolt, requires unity and coherence. Explaining this further, Camus arrives at an apparently shocking parallel:

> Revolt . . . is a fabricator of universes. This also defines art. The demands of revolt, truthfully, are in part aesthetic demands. All thought of revolt, as we have seen, expresses itself either in rhetoric or in a closed universe . . . prison, the besieged nation, the concentration camp, the empire of free slaves all illustrate in their own way the same need for coherence and unity. Over these closed worlds, man can at last reign. (*HR* 659)

Thus every form of revolt, because it experiences nostalgia for an impossible metaphysical unity, ends by creating a replacement for this, its own closed world. Is art then to be seen merely as a harmless form of (in any case inevitable) totalitarianism? a therapeutic outlet for would-be concentration camp directors? Camus in fact is not entirely clear on the criteria that distinguish betrayed revolt (revolution) from pure revolt (for example, artistic creation) but one key concept seems to be *unity* as opposed to *totality.* In art, man's need to create unity revolts against the flux and meaninglessness of nature with beauty rather than with terror. Lexical imprisonment, in Camus's very classical aesthetic, assumes a positive value, creating a paradigm of human experience. The primary goal of sculpture is "to imprison into a significant expression the body's fleeting passions" (*HR* 660). Camus's striking description of Piero della Francesca's *Flagellation* stresses the same value. In this painting details such as the hands doing the whipping and a row of olive

trees are "seized from the incessant movement of the Passion, and the agony of Christ, imprisoned in those images of violence and beauty, cries out again every day among cold museum halls" (*HR* 661).

By the end of the chapter "Revolt and Art," Camus has made an almost messianic claim for art as the forerunner of a new Renaissance. Even if the totalitarian forms of nihilistic revolution should conquer the world, he claims, art still would act as a savior and liberator of man. To illustrate this, he gives the example of a German lieutenant, prisoner in a camp, who used some pieces of wood to construct a kind of silent piano keyboard on which he composed music for himself. "Thus, from the depths of hell, mysterious melodies and cruel images of a vanished beauty would always bring us, in the midst of crime and folly, the echo of that harmonious insurrection which through the centuries bears witness to human greatness" (*HR* 679). The rhetoric is close to that of Malraux in *Les Noyers;* the image to some of the accounts of art as a form of "salvation" in the camps mentioned earlier in chapter 1.

While other lexical prisons can be found in the *Carnets,* "Noces," "L'Eté," and other essays, the examples above are indicative of the role played by metaphors of confinement in Camus's presentation of concepts central to his thought. Although the philosophical metaphors should not impose a reading on the fictional world any more than *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* should be read as the "translation" of *L'Etranger,* there are certain correspondences between Meursault's prison cell and "the walls of the absurd" as there are between the closed city of Oran and *l'univers concentrationnaire.* With this in mind, it is the role of the three types of topographical prisons that is now in question.

Actual prisons as potential settings fascinated Camus before and after the composition of *L'Etranger.* Sketches and plans for novels in the *Carnets* include scenes in and about concentration camps, references to Christ as condemned prisoner, and a dialogue in a cell between a prisoner sentenced to death and a prosecuting attorney. This anecdote illustrates Camus's idea of the condemned man's superior freedom: "You can't do anything to him," reflects the prosecutor, having received a slap in the face (*C2* 260). Another, more detailed view of the process of liberation in prison is in the essay on Oscar Wilde entitled *L'Artiste en prison,* which

appeared as an introduction to the French translation of *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* in 1952.

"There is not . . . a single unhappy being closed in with me in this miserable place who does not find himself in a symbolic relationship with the secret of life" (*AP* 1125). This, according to Camus, is what a much-changed Oscar Wilde wrote from Reading Gaol to one of his frivolous friends. The theme of the essay is that Wilde's sojourn in prison produced a complete, revolutionary change in both man and artist, from superficiality to depth, from "the art of the salon . . . to that of the prison" (*AP* 1127). The prisoner acquires a symbolic relationship with life first because the prison itself is a quintessence of "our servile and hypocritical societies" and, second, because within it, in the condition that Camus elsewhere calls *dénuement*, humanity, a life force basically good, is laid bare. The "secret of life," along the lines of both *Sisyphe* and *L'Homme révolté*, is perceived in its essential, classical form in the juxtaposition of the imprisoned condition and the revolt at the heart of the prisoner. One is reminded of Malraux's "prison books." Camus goes so far as to say that all great art reflects and honors the suffering and the revolt of the prisoner (*AP* 1126). The examples mentioned are *King Lear* and *War and Peace*, but one cannot help but think that Dostoyevski more than any other writer was in Camus's mind as he wrote the essay. "Why create unless it is to give meaning to suffering, even by saying that it is inadmissible?" (*AP* 1126). By the time he wrote *L'Artiste en prison*, Camus already had made some of his own contributions to the "art of prisons." Meursault's prison cells dominate the topography of the second half of *L'Etranger*. From there as from Wilde's prison, judgment is passed on our "servile and hypocritical societies" and on an absurd universe.

One tends to think of Meursault before the murder of the Arab as an innocent, "natural" man, living most of his life outdoors, on the beach. An examination of the spaces actually presented in the text, however, indicates that this impression is a distorted one. We see Meursault in fact more indoors than outdoors and more often than not in cramped quarters: offices (the nursing home director's and his own), the bright white morgue where he watches over his mother's corpse, Céleste's restaurant, and the boardinghouse where he lives, including Raymond's apartment and his own living quarters which he has reduced voluntarily to one

room. Moments of happiness in harmony with nature, all in the sea with Marie, are described in only three paragraphs (*E* 1136, 1148, 1160) and thus appear as brief interludes in an otherwise circumscribed life. It is true that the two settings that receive the most attention in the text are both out-of-doors: both portray Meursault walking a long distance. But these—the funeral procession at Marengo which Meursault summarizes with the thought "there is no way out" and the beach where he kills the Arab "because of the sun"—are precisely the places in which Meursault is least free, decors of death dominated by the cruel element holding Meursault in its power.[5] Otherwise, the most fully described settings are the morgue and Meursault's room, in which he spends an entire Sunday observing life from his balcony. Both of these spaces, of special significance to Meursault, will be echoed in the second half, the first in the courtroom where the jury replaces the bench of old people who seem to be "judging" him and the second in Meursault's prison cell.

Apart from the interludes of sea and Marie (we need not reiterate the symbolic links in *mer–mère–Marie*), Meursault's life in "freedom" consists of moving from one place to another or recounting, as participant or observer, one event after another. This is of course what the celebrated *passé composé* signifies: islands of time without connection, events without reflection. Oblivious, as it were, to the limits in which his life is lived, partly because the sea is always there as a possible escape, heedless of both the strictures and judgments of society as well as the warnings of the inevitability of death, Meursault will be forced into confrontation with all of these after his arrest.

In the second half of the novel, Meursault is never again seen outside nor is he seen in motion. The imperfect, as Roger Quilliot was the first to point out,[6] gradually replaces the *passé composé* as the dominant tense. The shift from the tense of disassociated events to that of habit and memory indicates the change in Meursault's consciousness, a change brought about primarily through his reactions to imprisonment.

The primary spaces in the second half of the novel, corresponding to its major divisions, are three: Meursault's first cell, the courtroom, and the cell he occupies after his death sentence is pronounced. In addition to these, Meursault appears in a "little room hung with curtains" with the examining magistrate, a room

(seen in flashback) that he occupied with Arab prisoners, the visiting room where he sees Marie, and a prison van transporting him from the court to his cell. The spaces that are dominated primarily by others, extensions, as it were, of the social system—judge's room, courtroom, visitors' room—are characterized primarily by heat, light, and stuffiness; those that become Meursault's own space—the two cells and the car—by obscurity, relative calm, and coolness. In terms of the symbolic spheres established in the first half of the book, one set is allied with the realm of the sun (a collusion of metaphysical and social absurds?) and the other with the realm of sea, sky, and stone. It is the latter realm, specifically Meursault's relationship to his cells, that will interest us here.

Meursault's initial reactions to his cell are characteristically brief:

> Some days later I was put by myself in a cell, where I slept on a plank bed hinged to the wall. The only other furniture was a latrine bucket and a tin basin. The prison stands on rising ground, and through my little window I had glimpses of the sea. (*E* 1175; *St* 90)

The binary relationship found throughout Camus is established at once: prison/sea corresponds to *dénuement*/luxury, poverty/splendor, *envers/endroit*. The new situation is also a kind of epitome or *mise en abîme* of the space of Meursault's preprison life: squalid enclosures with brief outlets.

There is, of course, one major difference between Meursault's present situation and his former one. In prison, the sea is seen through bars, its presence is felt as *separation*, and its possession experienced only through memory. Separation from the sea evokes separation from Marie, so that while Meursault gazes from the prison at his beloved element he is prepared metaphorically for a visit from his mistress.

> One day when I was hanging on the bars, straining my eyes toward the sunlight playing on the waves, a jailer entered and said I had a visitor. I thought it must be Marie, and so it was. (*E* 1175; *St* 90)

In the visitors' room, Marie's smile and the impressions of her body also must come to the prisoner through a grill, intensifying

for Meursault the reality of separation from his former sensual life. Marie's visit is in fact the last event directly connected with that life. When Meursault receives her letter telling him that she is no longer allowed to visit, he becomes more fully aware of his imprisoned condition: "I realized that this cell was my last home, a dead end, so to speak" (*E* 1175). Later on, Meursault reflects on his transformation from free man to prisoner in connection with his relationship to the sea.

> Still, there was one thing in those early days that was really irksome: my habit of thinking like a free man. For instance, I would suddenly be seized with a desire to go down to the beach for a swim. And merely to have imagined the sound of ripples at my feet, the smooth feel of the water on my body as I struck out, and the wonderful sensation of relief it gave brought home still more cruelly the narrowness of my cell. Still, that phase lasted a few months only. Afterward, I had prisoner's thoughts. (*E* 1178; *St* 95)

Similarly, when Meursault tells the warden that he misses women, he is told that such is the meaning of the loss of freedom.

"Prisoner's thoughts" involve, in contrast to unreflective sensation and notation, habit and memory. The second, particularly, shows the emergence of a new experience in Meursault's mental life (as well as the new tense in his discourse). But what does Meursault remember? Days at the beach, one would assume, or nights with Marie. Instead, curiously, it is his bare, uninteresting room that is the primary object of the prisoner's new mental exercise. Details of color and texture of each poor piece of furniture occupy longer and longer spans of memory. Through such spatial memory, Meursault also begins to intuit relationships. As the remembered space of the room imposes itself on the lived space of the cell, he comes to understand his own space in the world, the bare, restricted space that always has been his, and, eventually, the freedom of action that he must find within the limits of that space.

Like most prisoners, Meursault eventually loses his sense of clock and calendar time. Sunset and sunrise perceived through the window no longer signify days succeeding each other but "tides of light and darkness" (*E* 1180; *St* 100). What is most surprising, in

terms of Meursault's development, is that he is aware of and able to express his new relationship to time.

> I'd read, of course, that in jail one ends up by losing track of time. But this had never meant anything definite to me. I hadn't grasped how days could be at once long and short. Long, no doubt, as periods to live through, but so distended that they ended up by overlapping on each other. In fact, I never thought of days as such; only the words "yesterday" and "tomorrow" still kept some meaning.
>
> When, one morning, the jailer informed me I'd now been six months in jail, I believed him—but the words conveyed nothing to my mind. To me it seemed like one and the same day that had been going on since I'd been in my cell, and that I'd been doing the same thing all the time. (*E* 1180–81; *St* 100–101)

The style of this passage is typical of most of the second half of the novel. The imperfect and its compound the pluperfect are the predominant verbal tenses but any specific events that occur (in this case the warden's announcement to Meursault) are related in the present perfect. Meursault is now able to coordinate habit, memory, and his observations of the natural world through the window with his emerging inner life. Deprived of diversions and the daily routine, only certain eternal truths remain. Instead of living in a succession of present moments, Meursault—like Hans Castorp with his "eternal soup" and like the war prisoners—now lives in an eternal present, and this is what the imperfect tense conveys.

It is significant that this reflection on time is followed by a return to the setting of the prison cell. For the first time, we observe Meursault as he sees himself in a mirror and hears the sound of his voice. The cell window now serves a double function: it lets in the sounds and the light of evening from the outside, natural world, and it throws back to Meursault his own image. A symmetrical relationship is established between "the last light" and "my image" and "the evening sounds" and "my voice" (*E* 1181; *St* 101). His confined quarters thus serve as an instrument of self-knowledge. As Meursault is now capable of using his memory in the present, a casual remark made by a nurse at his mother's funeral becomes a description of his imprisoned condition. Mem-

ory, the painful awareness of solitude and of separation from the natural world are all telescoped into the last sentence of this chapter: "No, there was no way out, and no one can imagine what the evenings are like in prison" (*E* 1181; *St* 101).

Meursault again hears the sounds of evening while he is returning from the courtroom to the cell in his "prison van." This time, memory serves him so well that he can visualize human and natural scenes by merely hearing sounds in the dark, and the thought of them brings the memory of *having been* happy (*E* 1192). The memory of happiness, juxtaposed with consciousness of his present condition brings to Meursault an understanding of the hazardous, meaningless quality of life: "And so I learned that familiar paths traced in the dusk of summer evenings may lead as well to prisons as to innocent, untroubled sleep" (*E* 1192; *St* 123). The statement recalls the day at the beach when the sun led Meursault to murder instead of to sleep, and prefigures the famous "benign indifference of the universe."

As a prisoner, Meursault thus far has passed through two stages: first, awareness of confinement and separation and, second, the development of a consciousness and memory enabling him to connect the "eternal present" with the past. The process brings him an awareness of the meaning of happiness and of the absurdity of life. A final stage, the one that most interests Camus, remains. After the trial, Meursault is no longer a mere prisoner but a man condemned to death. The intensity of the final chapter of *L'Etranger* is in part due to the relationship conveyed between Meursault and his last space, the death cell.

Julien Sorel, after his trial and death sentence, was moved from a tower with a "sublime" view to an underground cell. The prisoner Fabrice del Dongo remains in a tower but eventually is deprived of the sight of the Alps by the construction of a shade restricting his view to the sky. Some of the internal transformations Meursault undergoes in his death cell recall those that Stendhal conveyed in Julien's interior monologue, but his new cell resembles that of Fabrice. Its window no longer offers a view of the sea but only of the sky.[7]

The position of the window is not described precisely, but it is called *la vitre du ciel* (pane of the sky) and Meursault spends days lying on his back watching the sunset through it. Eventually, he begins to sleep during the days and spends the nights waiting for

the dawn, the time of executions. The condemned prisoner thus is cut off completely from the element that, in his former life, meant physical "deliverance" or "liberation" but he is now brought into a new unity with the rhythm of the natural world, happy with the passing of another dawn as if he were reborn. The window through which Meursault perceives this alternation of night and day at first serves another purpose. While contemplating it, Meursault dreams of a possible "way out" of his sentence: "a *leap* out of the implacable rite, a race toward folly that offered all the chances of hope" (*E* 1200, italics mine). An acceptance of the inevitability of death is at first unbearable. The terminology used immediately recalls *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* and the essay on Kafka. Meursault, like his creator, may have a "nostalgia" for a leap out of the absurd condition, but he must learn to reject the temptation.

The two significances attached to the window, Meursault's final contact with the natural world and the temptation of a "leap," become clear in the climactic scene between Meursault and the prison chaplain. It is through opposition to the chaplain that Meursault learns to reject the possibility of a "way out."

Meursault and the chaplain argue not only with words, but through their opposing perceptions of the spatial environment. In Meursault's mind, the death sentence has come to have the same finality as "the presence of that wall along which I was crushing my body" (*E* 1201). Thus, when Meursault answers the chaplain's question to the effect that he has no hope and expects to die completely, he leans against the wall. The chaplain pleads with Meursault to see a "divine face" among the stones of his cell. Meursault answers that the only face he had ever sought there was that of Marie, but that he had found nothing. Similarly, while the chaplain turns his face upward as if in prayer, watching "the sky through bars" (*E* 1207), Meursault feels the sun on his forehead through the same opening. The final image of Meursault prefigures the certainties he is to formulate later: "I now had my back to the wall and light was flowing over my forehead" (*E* 1207; *St* 1497). When the chaplain murmurs, "Do you really love earthly things so much?" Meursault does not need to answer.

Implicit in the chaplain's words and attitudes is the thought of the suffering of Christ, the condemned man, and the resurrected Christ offering hope and salvation to men. He thus can see a divine face in the prison walls and can look up at heaven through prison

bars. It is, however, Meursault, and not the chaplain, who is in the situation of the man condemned to death. Meursault sees in the prison walls nothing but the limit posed by his death sentence.[8] He sees through the window not the ray of eternal hope but the last rays of earthly warmth. By opposition to the chaplain, he is able to reject the dream of a "way out" and hold fast to the existential certitude of the wall on his back and the sun on his forehead. It is the attainment of this certainty that, for Camus, gives the condemned man his peculiar freedom.[9]

Meursault's cell, in the tradition with variations as we have seen it from Socrates through the Resistance prisoners, is the space of opposition and social restriction that becomes the space of revolt, transformation, liberation. It is to some extent also the place of rebirth, described in the lyrical last paragraph of the novel where Meursault awakens to an experience of cosmic harmony and limitlessness resembling Rubashov's "oceanic feeling"; opening himself to the "benign indifference of the universe." Yet Meursault's experience of rebirth and liberation lacks the mystical, transcendental qualities of the romantic prisoners, or even of those of Malraux. It is in fact the rejection of transcendence and the pagan identification with the natural world that frees Meursault. Camus is content to give his "absurd hero" a sure, if limited, freedom in the knowledge of death and the value of life: "the only reasonable freedom: that which a human heart can feel and experience" (*S* 142).

The pattern of Meursault's imprisonment, especially the final scene, is to some extent recapitulated in the fourth act of *Les Justes* set in the cell (also in a tower) of the revolutionary hero Kaliayev. More specifically than Meursault, Kaliayev rejects any "way out" (pardon by the state, in exchange for repentance, offered by the police chief, and religious salvation, also contingent on repentance, proposed by the Grand Duchess). Refusing the judgment of officialdom, state and church, he assumes the consequences of his act and thus, by choosing to remain in prison, affirms his liberty. In *Requiem for a Nun*, Nancy Mannigoe, in prison and sentenced to die, asserts her freedom when there is no more hope of pardon. In this adaptation, Camus could not have had Nancy abandon religious hope without completely altering her character, but the religious emphasis of Camus's Nancy differs from that of Faulkner's. Jesus the man, the condemned prisoner, interests her more

than Christ the savior. He is "the brother of whores and thieves, the friend of murderers. The one they killed along with them" (*Rn* 915). All three of Camus's condemned prisoners are in some sense sacrificial victims, lucid Christs forsaken by God, free because they know there is no way out.

The prison cell as stage setting for a climactic scene was congenial to Camus's view of tragedy. In 1939 he observed, "Tragedy is a closed world—that one knocks into, bumps against. In the theater, it has to be born and die in the restricted space of the stage" (*Cl* 147). The spatial limits of the stage then may represent other physical spatial limits that in turn signify the metaphysically "closed world" of tragedy. Perhaps the most claustrophobic of literary forms, tragedy has tended to represent its hero as trapped victim partly through unity of place. Yet the tragic awareness that there is no way out brings about not despair, but knowledge, exhilaration, the "all is well" that Camus attributes to Sophocles' Oedipus. Camus would no doubt agree with the chorus in Anouilh's *Antigone:*

> And then, it's especially restful, tragedy, because you know there's no more hope, disgusting hope. You know you're caught, finally caught like a rat, with the sky on your back, and there's nothing to do except to scream; not to whine, no, not to complain—to scream at the top of your lungs what you had to say, what you had never said and what you didn't know yet.[10]

Concerned throughout his theatrical career with the problems involved in writing "modern tragedy," Camus clearly set out to create an example of the genre in his second play (after *Caligula*), *Le Malentendu.*[11] As the play was much criticized for its "claustrophobic" qualities, he attempted, in the 1958 preface to the American edition of his theater, to justify this in historical and psychological terms.

> *Le Malentendu* was written in 1941, in occupied France. At that time I was living, out of necessity, in the mountains in the center of France. This geographical and historical situation would suffice to explain the sort of claustrophobia from which I was suffering then and which is reflected in that play. It's hard to breathe in it, that's a fact. But we all had short breath at that time.[12]

The allusion to difficulty in breathing, metaphorical though it may be, recalls the fact that Camus's "claustrophobia" was at this time also physical. Allusions to his tubercular condition can in fact be found throughout the *Carnets* in conjunction with the obsessive space that became a central setting in *Le Malentendu* and other works, the lonely room.

The one type of room that fascinated Camus above all was the hotel room: "The place where I like best to live and to work (and, something more rare, where I wouldn't mind dying) is a hotel room."[13] This is due partly to the myth of *dénuement:* the discovery of the luxury and beauty of nature and life made possible by the barest surroundings. But the fact of staying alone in a city where one is cut off from daily life and distractions may bring about a Pascalian confrontation with the human condition. "Pleasure takes us away from ourselves just as Pascal's distraction (*divertissement*) takes us away from God. Travel, like a greater and graver science, brings us back" (*C1* 26). In a hotel room in Paris, Camus writes, "Why is it that knowing how to stay alone for one year in a humble room in Paris teaches one more than . . . forty years of 'Parisian life'?" (*C1* 206–7).

The hotel room that occasioned Camus's most vivid description of himself and his anguish was not, however, in Paris but in Prague, a city he visited in 1936 and which for him more than any other seemed to epitomize Europe in contrast to North Africa: landlocked and cloud-covered. In "L'Envers et l'endroit" Camus recounts the death of a stranger in the hotel room next to his and an ensuing intense anxiety, a feeling he then continues to carry within him and refers to as "the anguish of Prague."[14] The experience undoubtedly went into the making of *Le Malentendu.* The play was originally to have been entitled *Budejovice (ou L'Exilé)* and to take place in the small Czechoslovakian town of that name. One of Camus's notes for *Budejovice* reads: "Second act. Meditation on hotel rooms" (*C2* 64). Such a meditation does appear, briefly, in the second act of *Le Malentendu.*

The closed-in quality of *Le Malentendu* thus may be seen as a function of aesthetic necessity (the *monde clos* of tragedy), of historical circumstance (with reference not only to the isolation of the Resistance activists in France but also to captive Czechoslovakia), and of personal psychological experience. To these might be added the influence of the great Czech writer who felt himself

"married to anguish in Prague" and whose literary creation was seen by Camus as a *monde clos*, Franz Kafka.[15] The world of *Le Malentendu* is closed not only on stage but also by the imaginary space, described by the central character Martha, that the spectator or reader must feel to surround the stage space: "those lands without horizon . . . this inn and this rainy city . . . this country of shadow" (*M* 117). The topography of the play can be shown schematically as a series of concentric circles, with the two inner circles represented on the stage (see figure 1).

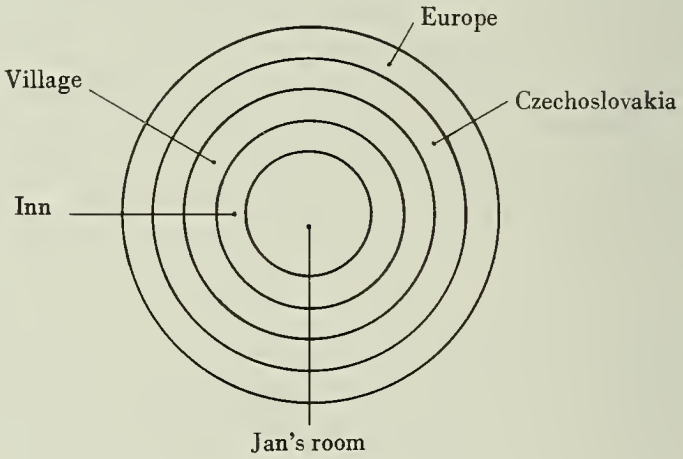


Figure 1

Le Malentendu is almost literally a tragedy of space. Modeled on both a newspaper story Camus may have read (and which Meursault reads in prison) and on an archetypal legend of the prodigal son who returns to his family and is killed by mistake,[16] the meager action in the play derives from the inevitable clash between Martha, whose desire is to get *out* of all the circles in the closed world and her brother-but-stranger Jan, whose desire is to come back *in* to the same world (but eventually, ironically, to liberate Martha and their mother). The other two characters in the play are unwillingly but passively magnetized by the force of these desires: thus the old, tired mother helps Martha kill rich visitors to the inn so that her daughter may escape to a country of sun and sea, and Jan's wife, Maria, reluctantly cooperates with her husband's scheme to spend the night alone in his former room without identifying himself to his mother and sister. Beyond the actors' de-

sires, the motivating forces might be called the world of the sea and the world of the prison. The various "misunderstandings," the ironies that bring about the tragedy, involve a misapprehension of their relationship. Thus Martha sees Jan dead as the instrument of her liberation from prison to sea but does not know that this is the intention of Jan alive; Jan perceives his entry into the world of the prison as a return to his roots, perhaps a rebirth, from which he will emerge with his mother to the sea, but does not know that hiding his identity will result in his death or that he and his mother will be reunited only as dead bodies in the cold waters of Czechoslovakia.

Martha contrasts her present European imprisonment to liberation in sun and sea in terms of the confining predominance of the soul and the liberating predominance of the body. Life by the sea is appealing to her because she has heard that it makes splendid, free bodies that are "empty" of mind or soul. At the end of the play, when her desire has been frustrated, Martha cries out bitterly for the country "where one can run away and be free." She exclaims her hatred for a climate and geography in which one's view is cut off on all sides, in which one is forced to look upward, "where we are reduced to God" (*M* 171). Central Europe is conducive to inwardness, contemplation, religion, and anguish: North Africa promises physical freedom, freedom from thought, and happiness.

If Jan returns from North Africa to the closed-in world of central Europe and closes himself into a hotel room, it is at least partially in order to seek the conditions for reflection and meditation that Martha is trying to escape. In the original version of the play this purpose was made more explicit. Love is opposed to contemplation, Maria to the need for solitude. Jan cannot be satisfied with love alone and must therefore "adventure" away from it. He defines his reasons for being alone in the room thus: "If it's true that my role is one of adventure, there's no greater adventure than meditation, and this is my cell."[17] The purpose of his quest, the "definition" of himself that he is attempting to find by a return to his homeland, is seen as something that probably can be found only after a certain amount of anguish in solitude: "But my stupid hope is that I have to . . . know the anguish of strange rooms before I can recapture the room of the son."[18] Jan's quest in this first version is specifically in the monastic tradition: a quest for libera-

tion from the world through voluntary restriction, a pursuit of meditation as preparation to receive the Son of man.

If Camus attenuates these religious referents in the final version of the second act, the function of the room remains basically the same. It is the Pascalian hotel room that Jan has chosen for meditation, it is the room of his childhood to which he has returned, it is also the room in which he will die. Jan comes seeking an order in his own life cycle and in the universe by means of a kind of ritual rebirth but finds instead an absurd death. Thus the tragic irony in his statement, "It's in this room that everything will be settled" (*M* 145).

The second scene of the second act, in which only Jan speaks, contains a "meditation on hotel rooms" of a metaphysical cast. In acknowledging that he has been unable to transform the room in the inn into the room of the son, Jan recalls other such solitary nights:

> I've known that too. It seemed to me then that there was an answer to find. Perhaps I'll find it here. (*He looks outside.*) It's getting cloudy. And here is my old anguish again, deep in my body, like a badly healed wound that every movement irritates. I know its name. It is the fear of eternal solitude, fear that there is no answer. And who would answer in a hotel room? (*M* 152)

Jan's "answer" is the rather too obviously symbolic presence of the silent old servant. What is interesting here is the nature of the anguish experienced and the question implicitly asked. Jan's fear of solitude seems to be precipitated both by the strangeness of the hotel room and by the view of the cloudy sky. It is as if the world were closing in. Deprived of the comforting (one might say "diverting") presence of Maria, Jan experiences the fear of eternal solitude, of a world without God and without human communication. His question might be phrased: "Does the hotel room represent the true human condition?" Like Maria's cry at the end of the play, it is also an appeal for help. The old man's mute presence here, like his final "no," confirms the lesson that Martha will state: "This room is made for sleeping and this world is made for dying" (*M* 162).

Jan's death is a paradigm of absurdity but since he is unconscious of its implications, it is difficult to call it tragic. The lucidity

acquired by Meursault, Kaliayev, and Nancy in their cells is, in Jan's case, an obscure presentiment. The burden of consciousness is left to the other three characters, each of whom experiences a form of revelation. The mother, through her suffering and guilt. discovers the "certitude" of love for her son. The manner of her suicide is not an act of complete isolation; she goes to join her son in the river. Similarly, Maria, although left abandoned in an absurd and godless world, retains the certitude of her feeling for her dead husband and thus cries out against Martha. Martha, however, rejected by her mother and partner in crime, remains absolutely alone and face to face with a world devoid of hope and meaning. Now that her desire for "deliverance" and freedom has been frustrated, her desperation is expressed in terms of the world closing in about her:

> My whole life has been spent waiting for the wave that would carry me off and now I know that it will not come. I must remain with, to my right and my left, before and behind me, a crowd of peoples and nations, of plains and mountains . . . and for my country I have this dark enclosed place where the sky has no horizon. . . . Let the doors shut around me! (*M* 170)

Lexical and topographical enclosures again fuse as Martha goes to hang herself in her own room. Jan's question about the human condition is for Martha an answer: an indifferent universe places men and women in a room for strangers in an obscure inn in a landlocked, cloud-covered Central Europe. Once her attempts to break out have been frustrated, Martha's destiny allies her with the universe rather than with human revolt: "it's now that we are in order" (*M* 178).

Three short stories from *L'Exil et le royaume* ("The Adulterous Woman," "The Guest," and "Jonas, or the Artist at Work") should be mentioned with *Le Malentendu* in that a predominant part of their topography is a room-as-trap exhibiting the same overall structure of closing in. Janine, the "adulterous woman" perceives, like Martha, a promise of deliverance in the sands of North Africa but returns to the hotel room, the space allotted her in life. Daru and his prisoner-guest suffer from misunderstandings of "in" and "out" desires comparable to those of Jan and Martha. Again, Daru sees a possibility of liberation in the desert but ends

as a prisoner in his schoolroom. While neither of these protagonists finds freedom in imprisonment, it is nonetheless true for them as it is for Jan and Martha that an understanding or perception of liberty is possible only from a prison. The artist Jonas, however, does discover a kind of liberation in his closed-in situation. More social than metaphysical, Jonas's progressive confinement is structured as a closing-in of the world followed by a closing-out of the world. In the dark loft to which he voluntarily restricts himself, Jonas (symbolically dead and reborn in the belly of the whale?) sees his "star" rise and discovers the paradoxical human truth *solidaire/solitaire.*

La Peste, conceived in Oran in 1941 and published in Paris in 1947, was written in part out of the same circumstances as *Le Malentendu,* during Camus's isolation in the Massif Central and the Occupation. Camus's statement of his intentions in writing *La Peste* bears a close resemblance to that on *Le Malentendu:*

> I want to express by means of the plague the suffocation from which we all suffered and the atmosphere of threat and exile in which we all lived. At the same time I want to extend that interpretation to the notion of existence in general. (*C2* 72)

The vocabulary again recalls Camus's personal struggle with tuberculosis as well as the situation of occupied France. Yet here the emphasis is on the experience of a collectivity, *nous,* and an even greater generality. A closing-in structures the narrative of the plague as it does in the modern tragedy and the short stories, but on a grander scale, encompassing a whole city. Unlike any of Camus's other prison fables, however, *La Peste* ends with an opening out, however cautious and temporary.

Camus, who originally had intended to call his chronicle *Les Prisonniers,* invites the reader to allegorical speculation with the epigraph he takes from the third volume of *Robinson Crusoe:* "Robinson Crusoe's Preface" to Defoe's "Serious Reflections": "it is as reasonable to represent one kind of imprisonment by another as it is to represent anything that really exists by that which exists not."[19] Thus we are disposed, first of all, to perceive Oran under the plague as a vast prison and then to superimpose on this prison others: the Occupation, certainly, and from other signs, *l'univers concentrationnaire* or *le quotidien concentrationnaire,* and the Pascalian human condition.

The topographical scheme of *La Peste* follows the gradual closing-in pattern until part 3 in which the closure is complete, narrative time has stopped, and experience is almost entirely spatialized. Part 4 contains some of the deepest prisons-within-prisons but also, as if in necessary juxtaposition, the first signs of liberation. In part 5 the gates of the city are opened, the people of Oran are free to move in space and to cause events to occur in time, but the recent experience of captivity remains a constant part of their experience. In addition to the collective city-prison a number of smaller topographical prisons play an important role: rooms such as Grand's, Rieux's, and especially the old asthmatic's: the hospital, the temporary hospital in a school where the Othon child dies, the railroad station, the actual municipal prison, and the "isolation camp." Lexical referents to captivity, exile, or imprisonment are fairly numerous—nineteen with the word "prison" and its derivatives alone—and tend to be concentrated at points where the consciousness of imprisonment is particularly intense.

Camus originally conceived two stages of the plague: first, a period of "hope" and, second, a period of adaptation or of learning to think "in pestilential terms" (*C2* 72). The analogy with Meursault, who evolved from a state of not really believing himself in prison to a state in which he had only "prisoners' thoughts" is evident; *La Peste* may in part be read as a collective version of the second half of *L'Etranger*. Here, however, the stages are analyzed more finely, structuring the entire novel.

Even before the plague closes it off, Oran is a modern city prison in the sense that Camus explains in "L'Eté":

> "Only the modern city," Hegel dares to write, "offers to the mind the terrain in which it can be aware of itself." Thus we live in the era of the city. Deliberately, the world has been amputated from what makes its permanence: nature, the sea, hills, evening meditations. There is no more consciousness except in the streets, such is our desert . . . the mole meditates.[20]

The city is the topographical correspondent to the metaphorical Hegelian-Marxist "prison of history." Until the eternal truths of nature and beauty can be reintegrated into our world, we will have to understand humanity in the context of history. Like other pris-

ons, the city cuts human beings off from liberating nature but also forces them into consciousness of themselves and their destiny.

Oran is however a peculiar case: neither landlocked like the European cities nor integrated with the sea like Algiers, it stands next to a splendid bay while "turning its back" on it and, in accordance with its snail-like plan, looks inward to its everyday commercial affairs. The plague will in one sense only emphasize the city's already narcissistic quality but because of the limits it imposes will heighten consciousness both of what is really going on inside and what is missed outside.

In part 1 the first signs of the plague appear with the rats that seem to come out from underneath the city and the spring weather: fog, rain, an unrelenting humid heat. It is as if the citizens of Oran are being invaded from below by the rats and closed in from above by the sky. The word prisoner first appears in this context: "Walking between those long whitewashed walls, or through those streets with their dusty stone windows, or riding in the grimy yellow streetcar, you felt a little like a prisoner of the sky" (*P* 1240). Yet the refusal to admit reality is strong. Rieux, when he first hears the word *plague* pronounced by Dr. Castel looks out the window (*P* 1243) and looks out the window again as he thinks about it: "On one side of the pane, the fresh spring sky, and on the other side the word which was still resounding in the room: plague" (*P* 1247). The sky still can be perceived as the space that liberates as well as the cover that encloses, but the plague already is associated with enclosed space. Rieux perceives the transitional nature of the sky that night: "He slowed down to look at the dark street and at stars that were appearing and disappearing in the black sky" (*P* 1264). The sentence ends in decrescendo with the disappearance of the stars, always signs of liberation for Camus.

Cottard, the man who fears arrest and imprisonment but knows that if all are imprisoned by the plague his individual imprisonment will not take place, is defined in the first part in relation to literary-prison texts. One is the tobacconist's account of a recent event in Algiers: a young employee who killed an Arab on a beach. Her comment, "If they clapped all that scum in jail, decent folks could breathe more freely" (*P* 1260; *Pg* 51), sends Cottard running from the shop. It also gives the reader a clue, not only to the interpretation of the figure of Cottard, who is far more

than an exemplary "collaborator" but also to the significance of *La Peste* as it relates to *L'Etranger*. "Decent folks" can maintain the illusion of freedom as long as they can put their scapegoats in jail, but when everyone is up against the wall, the illusion is broken and the scapegoat is useless. Cottard is thus in a sense the antithesis of Meursault. He identifies himself with another literary figure dear to Camus:

> Only I've been reading that detective story. It's about a poor devil who's arrested one fine morning, all of a sudden. People had been taking an interest in him and he knew nothing about it. They were talking about him in offices, entering his name on card indexes. Now, do you think that's fair? Do you think people have a right to treat a man like that? (*P* 1262: *Pg* 53)

Cottard, it would seem, has been reading Kafka's *Trial*, a book much read during the Occupation and with which many identified their own fate. Here again, an individual destiny will become collective and Cottard will avoid his singular arrest because everyone in Oran will become a Josef K. Rieux's advice to Cottard, given in spatial terms, seems to be to participate in the collective destiny: "What's important is for you to go out a bit. It's a mistake staying indoors too much" (*P* 1262; *Pg* 53). Cottard also prefigures Camus's last great *séquestré* in *La Chute*. Like Jean-Baptiste Clamence, he arranges his life on the basis that the guilt of all is equal to the guilt of no one.

The narrator, whom the reader does not yet suspect to be Rieux, in this first part untypically comments on the inhabitants of Oran from the perspective of his postplague knowledge. "They went on doing business, arranged for journeys, and formed views. How should they have given a thought to anything like plague, which rules out any future, cancels journeys, silences the exchange of views? They fancied themselves free, and no one will ever be free so long as there are pestilences" (*P* 1245–46: *Pg* 35). The perspective is almost godlike: individual activities lose their significance as if in a colony of ants. The same perspective appears from Tarrou's point of view to describe the individual characters that have been introduced by the end of part 1: "Tarrou watched the little old man, and the little old man spat on the cats. Grand hurried home every evening to his mysterious literary activities.

Cottard went his usual desultory ways" (*P* 1267; *Pg* 59). The imperfect places activity in circular time, without cause and effect. All in a sense join Cottard in a round dance, pursuing activities that are about to be deprived of future. Only the plague, subject of predicates in the *passé simple*, produces action and causality. "Moreover, the epidemic seemed to be on the wane; on some days only ten or so deaths were notified" (*P* 1267; *Pg* 59). As a result the order is given to close the city gates and the period of adaptation to imprisonment begins.

In part 2 the narrator abandons his godlike perspective, adopting the first-person plural to recount the collective period of adapting to confinement. The significance of the imperfect tense is made more explicit: "Dès lors, nous réintégrions en somme notre condition de prisonniers, nous étions réduits à notre passé, et si même quelques uns d'entre nous avaient la tentation de vivre dans l'avenir, ils y renonçaient rapidement" ("From then on, we returned to our state as prisoners, we were reduced to our past, and even if some of us were tempted to live in the future, they gave up rapidly" (*P* 1275). "Prisonniers" is used to describe the inhabitants of Oran five times in the nine pages that constitute the first chapter of part 2 and Camus makes it clear that the metaphor is to be taken explicitly: "Hostile to the past, impatient of the present, and cheated of the future, we were much like those whom men's justice, or hatred, forces to live behind prison bars" (*P* 1276; *Pg* 67). The prisoners are in the process of adapting to time as it is perceived in prison, but they have not yet learned to do so. They are then in the stage of Meursault when he still had "the thoughts of a free man." Hence a figurative beating of heads against walls (*P* 1276) and literal attempts to escape through the gates. Rambert, the stranger to Oran whose only thought is to join the woman he loves in Paris, is a case in point. Rambert chooses as his space the railroad station: closed, but shady and cool in contrast to the heat that has come to characterize the city under the plague. Here he studies timetables (a motif that will be echoed with the railroad schedules studied and memorized by Tarrou's father) and looks at travel posters of Paris and other places. But the trains are still and the imagined spaces cannot blot out reality. The station waiting room becomes for Rambert what the hotel room was for Camus as he experiences there "that awful

sort of freedom that one finds at the bottom of deprivation" (*dénuement*) (*P* 1307).

With the first sermon of Father Paneloux, the citizens of Oran seem finally to realize the fact that indeed they are trapped with no way out: "you have been beholding mankind and all creation with new eyes, since the gates of this city closed on you and on the pestilence. Now, at last, you know the hour has struck to bend your thoughts to first and last things" (*P* 1296; *Pg* 89). We are close to Pascal's Jansenist prison here with its revelation of the true human condition and its signs of liberation—Paneloux's call for repentance and prayer for grace—appearing in the depths of confinement. The physical situation in which the sermon is given reinforces its impact: the prisoners of the plague have packed themselves into the cathedral with its odor of incense inside and a dark and rainy sky without.

The effect of Paneloux's sermon manifests itself with a proliferation of prison terms: "emprisonnement," "claustration," "prison," "séquestration," "couvercle du ciel," "réclusion" (*P* 1299). All appear from the collective point of view of the citizens immediately after they have heard the sermon. Suddenly aware that they are "condemned, for an unknown crime, to an unimaginable imprisonment" (*P* 1299), the faithful, against the exhortation of their priest, begin to search desperately for a way out; thus a way *not* to come to terms with the essential nor to seek the signs of their liberation. The moral position of Rieux, Tarrou, and those who join their volunteer organization is formed in contrast both to those who seek to escape and to those who kneel in repentance before God. "They had to decide if, yes or no, they were in the plague and if, yes or no, they had to fight against it" (*P* 1325). Thus in this period of adaptation to imprisonment, three main stances are formed: the desperate search for a way out, the acceptance of imprisonment and search for liberation through repentance, and the recognition but nonacceptance of imprisonment together with struggle against the imprisoning agent, the plague. Two other stances are that of Cottard, freed by collective imprisonment, and that of the old asthmatic, who already has accepted sequestration as a way of life.

Topographically the second part is characterized by an intense heat growing throughout the month of June, by a sun that, as in

L'Etranger, seems to "pursue" and "strike" the citizens (*P* 1308), and by the resultant shutting of the windows, shutters, and doors of the city. Certain parts of the city are closed, curfews imposed. The heat begins to collaborate with the plague as imprisoning agent.

The third, central section is set at the height of the summer, but unlike the others it contains no references to precise events or even to individuals. Time, as in all prisons, seems to have stopped; the period of adaptation is over and a period of stasis has been reached. There is further isolation in space as well as suspension in time. A violent wind, along with the intense summer heat, keeps people off the streets and thus almost entirely confined to their homes. The narrator tells us that his fellow citizens are passing from the first to the second stage of the plague, that they are losing their memory and replacing it with habit. Time is reduced to the present. The future was already cut off; now the past is cut off as well. "In truth, everything became present for them" (*P* 1365). The narrator here refers to the municipal jail as if to a microcosm of the city-prison with its condemned inhabitants. For the first time, he ironically remarks, absolute justice reigns in the jail—guards as well as prisoners being condemned. The loss of the dimensions of past and future time and of individual freedom of action becomes clear on the level of style: the third part is recounted almost entirely in the imperfect and the first-person plural. Description becomes recurrence: "those eternal evenings, dusty and golden, that fell on the treeless city" (*P* 1367).

Individual destinies and actions begin to take shape again in part 4 but it is also here that the paradoxical nature of the collective prison asserts itself. The worst atrocities and most imprisoning aspects of the plague appear in this section along with the first signs of liberation. Rieux is described in one of the subprisons entirely defined by the plague: a hermetically sealed, overheated, overlighted hospital room staffed by almost unreal workers wearing gauze masks. Rambert enters this closed world in order to announce his decision to remain to fight the plague even though he has at last been offered a means of escape. We thus are able to contrast two spaces associated with Rambert: the cool railroad station with its dreams of escape and the hot hospital room that demands solidarity with the confined. Although Rieux and his creator are careful not to condemn the preference for happiness

over commitment, it is clear that the step toward liberation is made by the decision to reenter the world of the plague.

The death of Judge Othon's child, also in a spatial context dominated by the plague, brings to a climax the opposing courses of Rieux and Paneloux just as Meursault's death sentence brought about his confrontation with the chaplain. Watching the child die, Paneloux is described as "slumped against the wall" (*P* 1392; *Pg* 193). The vocabulary of his second sermon bears traces of his physical position as well as of a traditional Christian vocabulary. The confrontation with evil, Paneloux argues, puts the Christian "against the wall" or "under the walls of the plague" (*P* 1400). Forced to deny creation as it is or accept everything, the Christian is trapped: "Thus the Christian alone would spare nothing and, *all exits closed* [*toutes issues fermées*], would go right to the bottom of the essential choice" (*P* 1401, italics mine). Here Paneloux recalls Camus on Kierkegaard. The "existential leap" ends by accepting the absurd: "it was necessary to leap into the heart of the unacceptable" (*P* 1402).

Rieux and Paneloux are not of course Meursault and his chaplain. There is in fact no direct conflict except for the doctor's outcry to the priest that the child, at least, was innocent. Yet the two positions are defined as opposing reactions to the plague, or to the Pascalian prison, along the same lines as Sisyphus and the "existentialists." The doctor, typically, defines his position more by action than by words, thus more topographically than lexically. He continues his perhaps hopeless but unceasing struggle within the walls of the city, in the heated confines of the hospital, in individual rooms, and in the nightmarish "isolation camp" that creates its own separate universe within the universe of the plague—evoking perhaps to the 1948 reader Compiegne, Drancy, or the Vélodrome d'hiver.

It is soon after they visit an "isolation camp" that Rieux and Tarrou take their liberating swim together, their moment for friendship outside the confines of the plague. The decision to do this is made during the course of one of the novel's culminating scenes, Tarrou's "confession" to Rieux on the terrace above the room of the old asthmatic to whom the doctor pays a nightly call. The asthmatic's room, which appears at several points but only here "opens" to its terrace, is one of the most significant spaces of *La Peste*. Tarrou, who has observed the asthmatic, informs the

reader through his notebooks that the old man, after an abortive attempt to take a train out of Oran, had returned home, isolated himself in his bed and his room, and made the decision to do nothing (*P* 1312–13). Time is abolished from this space of *dénuement* for the old man will not allow a clock but estimates meal hours by the time it takes him to shift peas from one pot to another fifteen times. The old man seems to be proving that, despite Pascal, one can live in a room alone, and do it without the consolations of religion, which he refuses. Confined before his fellow citizens, imprisoned within the imprisonment of the plague, the asthmatic is one of those who has carried a consciousness of the absurd to its logical conclusion. It is he who pronounces the often-quoted "la Peste, c'est la vie" (the Plague is life).

Camus's positioning of the liberating terrace, where the view reaches beyond the boundaries of the city to the blending of sea and sky, and the stars reappear for the first time since the closing of the gates, cannot be accidental. Like the young Camus of "L'Envers et l'endroit" experiencing the plains of Italy after the hotel room in Prague, or Meursault celebrating the starry sky through his prison window, Rieux and Tarrou follow the royal road to liberation through the innermost prison. The "hour of friendship" takes them beyond the city walls and outside of the eternal round of collective being to a realm where individual actions at last count. The swim, in marked contrast to the "pestilential" narrative, is narrated in the *passé simple.*

The positions of the three characters who take definite, contrasting stands in regard to the plague—Rieux, Tarrou, and Paneloux—are reflected by the end of the novel in the spaces associated with them. Rieux's spaces are the enclosures of absurdity and struggle (hospital rooms, the isolation camp, Grand's room, the asthmatic's room) juxtaposed with the openings of individual happiness and revolt (the terrace, the swim): a characteristically Camusian logic of limits through alternation. The duality appears in a brief *mise en abîme* as Rieux glimpses Joseph Grand looking through a store window: "always there comes an hour when one is weary of prisons, of one's work, and of devotion to duty, and all one craves is a loved face, the warmth and wonder of a loving heart" (*P* 1431; *Pg* 237).

Paneloux, on the other hand, closes himself more and more into the world of the plague, finally dying alone in his room. The

"leap" takes place only in confined solitude. In between the two positions, although closer to that of Rieux, is Tarrou, the would-be "saint without God." Like Paneloux, Tarrou is searching for a form of transcendence from within the closed world; like Rieux he revolts against the order of things in which men are condemned to die and is able to seize the moment of personal liberation.

It is appropriate that Tarrou's death takes place in part 5 as the plague is receding and the city opening up again. As the first signs of liberation appear, Tarrou lies ill in Rieux's apartment in "that room cut off from the world" (*P* 1455). Like a model "absurd" man, Tarrou has lived without hope and without illusions. His struggle against the common death sentence must take place within the imprisoned condition where the captives are aware of their mortality. Once the prisoners are free to resume their own hopes and illusions, Tarrou is of no more use to them and his confrontation with death becomes a purely personal one.

Rieux, on the other hand, can feel something of the collective joy in liberation while maintaining his distance from it. All of the signs of closing that intensified in the first three parts reopen in part 5: the sky, once a "cover" of heat and fog, is a clear winter blue, people circulate in the streets rather than staying behind closed doors, trains and ships move, and at last the gates open. The stars, rather than coming in and out as in part 4, shine "hard as flint" (*P* 1471). Rieux, however, retains from the plague a vision of the "two sides of the coin." The narrator implicitly contrasts his memory to the single-mindedness of the happy lovers who seem to have already forgotten the plague, thus imposing on the opening movement the "limits" of a binary vision aware of the permanent threat of imprisonment to the human condition.

> They calmly denied, against all evidence, that we had ever known that crazy world in which the murder of a man was as common as that of a fly . . . that imprisonment which brought with it an awful liberty with regard to everything that was not the present, that odor of death that stupefied all those that it did not kill. Finally, they denied that we had ever been that dumbfounded populace a part of which was daily thrown into the mouth of a furnace and went up in greasy smoke while the other part, shackled with the chains of impotence and fear, waited its turn. (*P* 1463)

Here is perhaps the most succinct and gripping depiction of Camus's plague: a passage touched by Pascal's and by Malraux's images of the human condition, but one that could have been written only in a world that had known both the Occupation and Auschwitz.

Like *La Peste* (and the play based on it, *L'Etat de siège*) Camus's two late *récits*, *La Chute* and "Le Renégat," take place within a city that functions as a "closed world." They also exhibit the same closing-in pattern that structures the chronicle of the plague and other stories in *L'Exil et le royaume*, but in a way that is more static than dramatic. Unlike the prisoners of Oran the prisoner held by "savages" in the salt-city Taghâza and the self-styled prisoner of Amsterdam already have accepted their imprisonment and their defeat and thus can look forward only to the termination of the closing in. Narration of events in the present thus becomes ancillary to a parallel narration of past events. In marked contrast to the heroes of *La Peste*, the renegade missionary comes to worship the power that imprisons him, rather than rebelling against it. Jean-Baptiste Clamence, in a more complex fashion, is both the creator and the victim of the laws governing his self-made closed universe. His discourse metaphorizes Amsterdam, transforming it to an unreal city, a Dantesque hell, a solipsistic prison-universe in which he is both jailer and prisoner, punisher and punished, ruler and ruled, *juge-pénitent*.

Two levels of topography correspond to the two levels of narration in *La Chute*. The topography of the present, Clamence's re-created Amsterdam, is paralleled by an imaginary topography, the evocation by Clamence of important sites presumably from his past, in Paris and elsewhere, as well as imaginary or historical places he cites as exempla in the course of his verbal meanderings. As the unreliable narrator tells his interlocutor, it is difficult to distinguish the true from the false in what he says. It hardly matters which is which, for his "true" past and his fictions both serve metaphorical functions. Along with the two levels of topography, the incessantly verbal Clamence creates another system of metaphors on the lexical level. While there are several types of spaces throughout *La Chute*, those characterized by enclosure dominate, articulating with each other in a spiral movement that comes to rest in the concluding space of Clamence's room.

The two levels of topography in *La Chute* reinforce one of the

novel's major themes: Jean-Baptiste's discovery that he and his fellow human beings are double, here and elsewhere, being and seeming, acting and dreaming. Unlike Camus's normal binary universe, informed by a logic of limit, Clamence's duality leads to an imbalanced duplicity, an imbalance carrying narrator and reader through vertigo to fall. The dark Zuydersee, in contrast to the blue Mediterranean, is itself a part of a topography of imprisonment. The only images opposing the Netherland and other enclosures are those involving height—the mountains and bridges from which Clamence once loved to dominate—but these are envisioned not as possibilities of liberation, but as places lost forever, Eden on top of the mountain of purgatory viewed from the last circle of hell. The only movement possible is downward and inward and finally, Clamence hopes, out through the back door.

The name of the first setting to appear in the novel, the Mexico-City bar, is itself double; in Europe but elsewhere, familiar as a city but exotic and dreamlike as a far-off country. Here on the outskirts of Amsterdam, facing the port, Jean-Baptiste Clamence introduces himself to his interlocutor and the reader. An initial self-description characterizes his own double nature: "Je suis bavard, hélas!, et me lie facilement" (I am talkative, alas! and make friends [bind myself] easily, *Ch* 1476). Clamence does indeed bind himself, to those he hopes to ensnare as well as in other ways. His loquaciousness attempts to be a flight away from his bound state but in fact serves to bind him more and more.

Clamence accompanies his new acquaintance out of the bar into the streets of Amsterdam on a metaphorical-mythological tour of the city. Within the concentric canals resembling the circles of Dante's hell, the judge-penitent has chosen to live in the Jewish section, scene of one of the "greatest crimes in history." The engulfing darkness and the rain pointed out by Clamence parallel the vocabulary he uses to describe the Dutch people: "*wedged* [*coincé*] into a little space of houses and canals, *hemmed in* [*cerné*] by fogs" (*Ch* 1480; *F* 12, italics mine). Yet these people who live closed in their "bourgeois hell" are also dreamers, adventurers, explorers of Java. The extremity of Europe is at once its inmost core, site of its devastating crimes and its commercial success, of restricted life and great dreams, the circle of the duplicitous people, the traitors.

While continuing his guided tour of Amsterdam as solipsistic

inferno, Clamence regales his companion with the creation of a metaphorical topography of his past. This begins with a series of oppositions between heights and depths, open and closed spaces. As he describes the "Eden" of his life in Paris as successful lawyer and defender of the downtrodden, he conceptualizes his need to dominate others morally in spatial terms: he could live freely only on "supreme summits" (*points culminants, Ch* 1485), preferably on a mountain where he could "dominate" an island. The need to dominate morally and spatially entails a horror of enclosure:

> In my opinion no one meditated in cellars or prison cells (unless they were situated in a tower with a broad view); one just became moldy. And I could understand that man who, having entered holy orders, gave up the frock because his cell, instead of overlooking a vast landscape as he expected, looked out on a wall. (*Ch* 1486; *F* 24–25)

(One recognizes here the prisons of Camus's "honest murderers," Meursault and Kaliayev, and the tradition of Julien Sorel and Fabrice del Dongo.)[21]

The lover of high points recounts in wonder the anecdote of a man who slept on the ground every night as an act of solidarity with an imprisoned friend, an action he would be incapable of imitating. The lawyer's lexicon reveals quite a different spatial relationship with human beings: "When I was concerned with others, I was so out of pure *condescension* . . . my self-esteem would *go up* a degree" (*Ch* 1498; *F* 48, italics mine). Descent and binding relationships are made only in order to facilitate ascent. His relationships with women are literally *liaisons*, attempts to bind in order not to be bound. With one in particular he confesses: "I attached myself to her as I imagine the jailer is bound [*se lie*] to his prisoner" (*Ch* 1506; *F* 64).

After his "fall," which began with the laugh he heard one night from the Pont des Arts and the memory it evoked of the young woman's suicide from the Pont Royal a few years earlier,[22] Clamence's spatial sense began to change. Like Meursault before the row of old people at his mother's wake, he envisions others as judges: "The circle of which I was the center broke and they lined up in a row as on the judges' bench" (*Ch* 1513; *F* 78). The worst of his fears begins to realize itself: "les issues sont fermées" (the exits are closed, *Ch* 1514). The feeling of being judged leads him

to "chercher une issue" (look for an exit, *Ch* 1518). Debauchery for a while provides him with at least the illusion of a way out, of floating on his former heights, until one day he perceives from a boat a speck calling to mind a drowning person. The event is decisive: "The day I realized definitively that I was not cured, that I was still cornered and that I had to make shift with it . . . I had to submit and admit my guilt. I had to live in the little-ease [*malconfort*]" (*Ch* 1529; *F* 109).

The *malconfort,* or "little-ease" as it was called in the Tower of London,[23] becomes the spatial image around which Clamence's new concept of his life becomes crystallized. It was, as he describes it, an ingenious medieval invention: a cell not wide enough for standing nor broad enough for lying down. The physical discomfort constantly experienced by the prisoner served as a reminder of his moral and spiritual guilt. What begins as a lexical metaphor evolves into a topography as "real" for Clamence as spaces allegedly recalled from his own experience, complemented by an example from contemporary history. This, the "spitting cell" invented by the Nazis, not only rendered the prisoner immobile but allowed him to be spat upon by his "superior." Such creations allow the last judgment to take place every day. And yet, since men continue to cling to the idea of their innocence, they are put in the absurd position of the "little Frenchman" in Buchenwald who told the authorities (à la Josef K), "My case is exceptional. I am innocent!" (*Ch* 1515).

Put in spatial terms, the scheme Clamence proposes to accomplish is to draw others into the little-ease where he will dominate them or, in conformity with his earlier habits, to descend in order to ascend, to bind in order to be free. All of us, declares the false prophet, are at once judges and accused, Christs and Antichrists, innocent and guilty, "reconciled in the little-ease . . . we should be at least if I, Clamence, had not found a way out [*issue*], the only solution, truth at last" (*Ch* 1533; *F* 117). The guilt of all will mean the guilt of no one and the "way out" for the judge-penitent.

The topography that corresponds to the little-ease is Jean-Baptiste's room in Amsterdam, small, circumscribed, *dénué* like Camus's hotel rooms, "barren as a coffin" (*Ch* 1536) but graced with the stolen painting of the "just judges." In conformity with his plan, the lawyer, immobilized in bed, succeeds in drawing his

interlocutor into his space by the end of the novel. The visitor must be sure to lock the door behind him, for "I am also eager to block the door of the closed little universe of which I am the king, the pope, and the judge" (*Ch* 1539; *F* 128). Articulating with both the imaginary little-ease and the real room is the concentration camp (past real or imaginary?) near Tripoli that the judge-penitent describes to his guest. Rather, he feels no need to describe it, since the camp has become a stock image for "children of the half-century." Hence the ironical pronouncement, "A hundred and fifty years ago, people became sentimental about lakes and forests. Today we have the lyricism of the prison cell" (*Ch* 1537; *F* 123–24). The lawyer's own form of cellular lyricism was of course to find a metaphorical way out of the prison through his domination of others. Thus, he says, he was elected "pope" by his group in the camp. The act of enclosing (or again, binding, *liaison*) that ensures Clamence's own avoidance of attachment is reflected in his language: "Let's just say that I *closed the circle* [*bouclé la boucle*] the day I drank the water of a dying comrade" (*Ch* 1539; *F* 126, italics mine).

In one of the manuscripts of *La Chute*, Camus had Clamence pronounce, "The only way out of the little-ease, *mon cher*, is still prison."[24] In a second manuscript, he apparently intended to accord his prisoner this exit, since the novel was to end with the arrest of Clamence by his interlocutor, revealed to be a Belgian policeman, for collaboration in the theft of *The Just Judges*. Imprisonment in a jail and under a law created by society is no doubt more comfortable than confinement in the self-created little-ease whose walls are the consciousness of one's own guilt. In the final version, Clamence retains a hope that he will be arrested and a certain nostalgia ("I thus have a chance of being sent to prison—an attractive idea in a way" [*Ch* 1540; *F* 130]) but Camus does not grant him this relatively easy solution. Nothing, in fact, indicates that he will exit either from his room (or even his bed) or his little-ease, though he repeats, while watching the snow from his window, that he must go out. Like one of his prototypes, perhaps, he seems to have discovered that there is no exit and that the cycle of judgment and penitence, mountains and caves, ends and continues in hell. The alternations of heat and cold from which he suffers correspond to the topography of Dante's last circle. Clamence would like to be Satan reigning over the captive souls but is

instead Satan stuck in the ice. The only "salvation," or undoing of the cycle would be an act of compassion, a voluntary sharing of imprisonment, or a form of *lyrisme cellulaire* of which Clamence believes his contemporaries to be incapable: "Everyone will be saved . . . and you, for example, starting from today you will sleep on the ground every night for me. The whole lyre!" (*Ch* 1548). But this passing moment of ironical sentimentality does not prevent Clamence from continuing his desperate attempt to ensure his own liberty by ensnaring others into his closed world. Using as his building blocks the Amsterdam ghetto, the modern concentration camp, and the medieval cell and hell, the child of the half-century makes his own contribution to the metaphorical prison tradition by creating a private spiritual topography, a trap for his contemporaries. In a sense the process is the inverse of that in *L'Homme révolté* where actual prisons and camps often appear as the inevitable result of an elaborate system of metaphors used by Camus: the "prison of history" transforming itself into the Gulag. Yet Jean-Baptiste's solipsistic universe centered around his coffin-bed recapitulates in its structure what for Camus are the great historical tragedies of our time, the totalitarian "closed worlds" that begin with a search for absolute liberty and end by imposing servitude.

La Chute is technically the most innovative and the most "modern" of Camus's novels, due in part to its predominantly spatial structure. Whereas Rieux's "chronicle" of the plague uses space to some extent diachronically (the closing and opening of the city gates and even the stagnation point when time seems to stop are indexes of the narrative progress of the plague and its victims), the unreliable Clamence's account of his "fall" is not an account at all but a series of juxtapositions. Clamence's order is analogical rather than chronological: he recounts the suicide in the Seine while on the canals, an event that took place in a boat from a boat and, of particular importance here, the prison camp episode from his room in the ghetto. Time, in the judge-penitent's narrative, becomes subservient to space. His effort is in fact to squeeze history and his contemporaries into an eternal *malconfort*.

Topographically and metaphorically, *La Chute* exhibits something like a negative face of *L'Etranger* and *La Peste* while lacing with irony the claustrophobic pessimism of *Le Malentendu*. It is revealing that the "real" prisoners—of colonial law or of an

epidemic—come to find a certain freedom while the "figurative" prisoners of dark northern cities forge their own chains while attempting to free themselves. Prisons, it would seem, are for Camus a given for which he might have written a manual of good and bad usage. On the one hand they are necessary to the Camusian perception of "limits," half of the binary vision. The road to freedom does not lead to an escapist pagan immersion on the beaches of North Africa but *through* an awareness of the metaphysically and historically absurd modern condition; thus Camus's pronouncement that the only concept of liberty he could have was that of an individual under a modern state or a prisoner. It is in learning to resist, to revolt against the power that encloses, that the prisoner rediscovers inner sources of freedom and/or a solidarity with fellow prisoners. In this process the limit to imprisonment reasserts itself as nature allies itself with human liberty: the sun and the stars flood Meursault's death cell, the sea and the sky offer themselves to Rieux and Tarrou at the point of their most extreme confinement. The negative usage of prison leads on the other hand to: collaboration with rather than revolt against the forces that imprison; immersion in an "unlimited" closed world like that of Taghâza or Amsterdam or misunderstanding of the nature of duality in Prague; imposition of a public or private *univers concentrationnaire*. And yet, in his fictional work, the metaphorical spirals of duplicity fascinated Camus as much as the clear equilibrium of duality. It is possible that by the end of his life he thought the children of the half-century capable of nothing better.

4 A Literature of Encagement

The ironies in Camus's last novel stem at least in part from the bitterness that surrounded his polemic with Sartre in *Les Temps modernes* four years earlier. A composite of Camus's judgment of "existentialist judge-penitents"[1] and of those same existentialists' judgment of the high and mighty "belle âme" Albert Camus, Jean-Baptiste Clamence echoes the language of *L'Homme révolté* when he mocks the absolutist Parisian intellectuals who renounce God only to throw themselves into the arms of another (presumably Marxist) master. Camus's letter to *Les Temps modernes* accuses "monsieur le directeur" and his collaborator Jeanson of wanting to "free man from every shackle in order to encage him in practice in an historical necessity."[2] In the vein of *L'Homme révolté,* Camus denounces Marxism, the so-called philosophy of liberty, as the generator of the Soviet concentration camps. Sartre, in his reply, argues that it is not Marxism that the camps put to question, but all of humanity. While they must be denounced vigorously, the Soviet camps must not be used to let the West forget its own oppressions. He twists Camus's metaphor into peculiarly Sartrian language:

> I only see around me *already enslaved* Freedoms that are trying to tear themselves away from their native servitude. Our Freedom today is nothing but the Free choice of struggling to *become Free* . . . a paradox of our *historical* condition. . . . You see, it is not a question of *encaging* my contemporaries: they are already in the cage: on the contrary, it's a question of uniting with them to break the bars. For we too, Camus, are encaged.[3] (italics in original)

This cage is not an invention of the moment but part of a major network in Sartre's considerable body of lexical and topographical enclosures. It has important autobiographical roots, for the evolution in Sartre's thought toward a theory of *engagement* appears to have begun with an experience of *encagement*. It was his wartime service, and especially his internment in a German prison camp that was, according to both Sartre himself and Simone de Beauvoir, the catalyst that completed his transformation from abstract philosopher to socially committed writer.[4] Sartre makes the connection between his imprisonment and the development of his concept of liberty even more explicit in a 1951 interview: "It is in barbed wire that I became conscious of true Freedom."[5]

Later, the experience of the Occupation reinforced the model of collective confinement as a generator of human solidarity. The historical situation there presented itself with such clarity that the means for uniting to break the bars of the cage were ones on which Sartre and Camus could agree. Never was the relationship between *encagement* and *engagement*, imprisonment as a means to liberation, so evident. Thus Sartre's resonant, nostalgic sentence written only a few years after the fact: "We have never been so free as under the German Occupation."[6]

The vision of the collective prison as the place of solidarity, common struggle, and affirmation of freedom through choice and action would seem to unite Sartre with Malraux or, indeed, with the Camus of *La Peste*, but another aspect of the image is peculiarly Sartrean. Immersion in collectivity is double-edged, for proximity makes the other prisoners appear not only as comrades but precisely as *other*. The stalag served as a model for *Huis clos* (*No Exit*) as well as for *Chemins de la liberté* (*Roads to Liberty*).

Two other types of lexical prisons appear in Sartre's philosophical and autobiographical works. One is the Pythagorean body-prison, integrated into existentialist theory in *L'Etre et le néant* (*Being and Nothingness*). Our bodies individualize our souls, giving us our contingent point of view on the world. The objective, in Sartre's ontology, is not to free the soul from its bodily prison but rather to transcend our natural condition through the exercise of our consciousness (*pour-soi*). The process of creating one's own freedom involves an existential awareness of the self, but one also may renounce freedom by giving way to the self

as body, permitting consciousness to be buried in the domain of the "physiological." Sartre's female characters are particularly prone to a kind of submission to imprisonment in the body or *incarnation.*

The model for the final type of prison, the solitary room, is probably Sartre's own room, the writer's room, or rather the series of bare rooms, free of possessions, that Sartre chose to inhabit. Sartre's obsession with sequestration has been commented upon widely,[7] and the following remark, made in an interview with Madeleine Chapsal, often quoted: "I have never been sequestered enough, for my taste. . . . Deep down, it is the negative of one of my dreams: to be in a cell, and to be able to write in peace. I shall nourish that lovely dream until my death!"[8] Certainly, the men to whom Sartre devoted his career as a literary critic—Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Genet, Flaubert, as well as the painter Tintoretto—are all *grands séquestrés* whose artistic creation results in some sense from their particular form of sequestration. The romantic and symbolist variation on monasticism—isolation from the world and salvation through art—was indeed, as Sartre has shown in *Les Mots*, an old dream of his, perhaps the negative of the picture of the artist engaged in history. Sartre concludes his discussion on sequestration in the interview cited above by reaffirming the priority of the collective: "If I am a prisoner, like all those who have said no and repeat it, I am prisoner of the present regime." The suggestion emerges that solitary sequestration, as a reaction to collective encagement imposed from outside, may constitute a search for a form of liberation. Flaubert embarks on his ascetic career as writer in reaction to his condition as bourgeois and as the idiot of the family. Genet, assuming "to the end" the condition of thief and prisoner imposed on him, forges his creations from within his prison. The result is the story of a liberation: "genius is not a gift but the way out [*l'issue*] that one invents in desperate cases."[9]

It is evident that Sartre tends to express philosophical concepts in a highly metaphorical and often spatial language.[10] The notion of *situation*, inherently spatial, is particularly adaptable to the prison metaphor. In *L'Etre et le néant*, Sartre defines the elements in one's *situation* as the place one occupies (including family, social class, milieu, etc.), one's past, one's immediate surroundings, and the fact of death, the limit in every situation—all viewed phenomenologically through the perception of a particular

consciousness. His preoccupation with the reality of death in human life brings him close to defining a human condition with another variation on Pascal.

> It has often been said that we are in the situation of a condemned prisoner among others, ignorant of the day of his execution but who sees his jail companions being executed every day. This is not exactly right: we should rather be compared to a condemned man who prepares himself bravely for death, who spends his time getting ready to look impressive on the scaffold and who, in the meantime, is carried off by an epidemic of Spanish flu. (*EN* 617)

Within the terms of this general condition, each human being must apprehend his particular situation, "the singular countenance that the world turns toward us" (*EN* 635). When the jail metaphor is used in these terms, it seems that it is possible to escape. Action and the creation of one's liberty are possible only within the context of the concrete situation: "one does not escape from a jail in which one was not enclosed" (*EN* 566). No situation is inherently freer than any other, for freedom consists not in obtaining one's ends, but in willing what one can. Thus the prisoner, or the slave, can be free not in terms of a Bergsonian "inner freedom" but by means of a project directed toward escape or liberation.

Sartre's rapprochement with Marxism caused him to modify this position considerably and to renounce a theory of liberty that implies that bourgeois and workers, for example, are equally free. In *Critique de la raison dialectique*, the affirmation of liberty in situation includes a recognition of the socioeconomic forces that necessarily alienate freedom. It no longer seems so easy to escape from, or even to plan to escape from, jail; the prisoner's freedom to will as proposed in *L'Etre et le néant* appears naive. The "practico-inert" (Sartre's term for the institutionalization of past *praxis* or free action) limits and enslaves individual freedoms. "In the field of the practico-inert, freedom becomes the way in which alienated man must live out his life sentence in the penitentiary and, finally, the only way he has to discover the necessity of his alienation and his powerlessness" (*CR* 94). Yet in his attempt to rethink existentialism within a Marxist framework, Sartre affirms the possibility of transcendence from within the historical situation with another prison metaphor. "Man is enclosed *inside*, he never

ceases to be bound to *all* the walls that surround him, nor to *know* that he is walled in. All those walls make up *a sole prison* and that prison is a *single life, a single act . . .*" (*CR* 74, italics in original). Using a variation on the same metaphor, Sartre explains that when a man feels that he is being suffocated on all sides, he goes to open a window. Until he does, "the closed and overheated room reveals an incompleted act" (*CR* 97).

The alienation of liberty through the practico-inert plays no role in Sartre's drama and fiction before *Les Séquestrés d'Altona* (*The Condemned of Altona*). It is the situation as trap, the *situation-limite* that, as Victor Brombert has shown,[11] lies at the theoretical and practical base of Sartre's drama and may be found in his fiction as well. The character who creates himself by inventing (or refusing to invent) a "way out" of a given situation is inherently dramatic. Sartre describes the dramatic situation as "a mousetrap, walls everywhere,"[12] and again as "a call; it hems us in; it proposes solutions to us; it's up to us to decide."[13] Dramatic characters are presented as "freedoms caught in their own trap."[14]

The numerous lexical prisons and other spatial metaphors in Sartre's philosophical, theoretical, and autobiographical writings, only briefly sampled here, may be seen as "unfolding" into topographical enclosures in his drama and fiction. These tend to fall into three classifications: first, works in which solitary, cellular prisons are not the only settings, but in which they exercise a centripetal or generating role of great importance to one or more characters. This type is often an extension of a body-prison, especially in the case of female characters. Included here are various rooms in the stories "Erostrate," "Intimité," and "L'Enfance d'un chef," and in Sartre's first two novels, *La Nausée* (*Nausea*) and *L'Age de raison* (*The Age of Reason*). One might also include in this category two private spaces in *Nekrassov* and *Kean* (Nekrassov's hotel room at the Georges V and Kean's dressing room) in which the hero confronts the illusion he presents to the world with his illusory "real" self. The second group consists of works in which a principal setting is (on the model of the prison camp or occupied Paris) a form of closed world in which a large number of people find themselves confined and in which a central figure seeks their and his own liberation. Included here are the plays *Bariona* (written in the prison camp), *Les Mouches* (*The Flies*), *Le Diable et le bon Dieu* (*Lucifer and the Lord*), and the remainder of *Les*

Chemins de la liberté (*Roads to Freedom*). Third are the works that take place entirely within one or a number of cellular (collective and/or solitary) enclosures. These include *Le Mur* (*The Wall*), *La Chambre* (*The Room*), *Huis clos* (*No Exit*), *La Putain respectueuse* (*The Respectful Prostitute*), *Les Mains sales* (*Dirty Hands*), *Morts sans sépulture* (*Dead without Burial*), *and Les Séquestrés d'Altona* (*The Condemned of Altona*). Each of these in some way presents a polarizing tension between spaces, either in the form of imaginary spaces evoked within the "real" setting (e.g., *Huis clos, La Putain*) or as a dynamic between represented spaces with very different significances (e.g., *La Chambre, Le Mur, Les Séquestrés*). We will analyze closely a few important examples of each type.

Self-made prisons of subjectivity, shells secreted from the body, idiosyncratic sanctuaries: these are the rooms into which Sartre's women (as if from certain pages of *The Second Sex*) Lulu, Mme Darbédat, Marcelle, and the young Anny retreat into narcissism and immanence; where Erostrate and Lucien Fleurier prepare their attempts at transcendence; and where Roquentin and Mathieu, more evolved, oscillate between the fascination of retreat and the discovery of authenticity. Both Paul Hilibert, would-be destroyer of temples, and Lulu, discontented wife of the impotent Henri, are confined by a self-made destiny to Montparnasse and to certain rooms, inauthentic beings unable to realize their projects. The different ways in which Sartre situates them in space, however, are indicative of his divergent perceptions of male and female inauthenticity. Hilibert, an "imaginative" character, lives in a symbolic relationship to his surroundings. Somewhat like Jean-Baptiste Clamence, he experiences moral superiority over his fellow human beings from physical superiority on his sixth floor balcony. Alone in his high cage, "Erostrate" (a name he learns from a colleague) makes plans to act on his antihumanist, quasi-surrealist convictions. He buys a revolver and announces (to himself) his intention to "shoot men." In preparation, he seems to feel the need to shut himeslf in his room to "make plans." He remains there for three days in a visionary, timeless world. The form of his "exit," no doubt a parody of Breton and the surrealist act, also reads like a parody of the Sartrean *liberté prise au piège* (entrapped freedom) inventing a way out of a situation. Hilibert transforms his retreat into a prison created by others: "I would have given anything to

leave my room, but I couldn't because of the people walking in the streets" (*M* 97). It is only by viewing himself in the third person, as if his exit were predestined, that he is able to make the decision to go out. "In a closed room, in the dark he is crouched. For three days, he has neither eaten nor slept. The doorbell has rung, and he has not answered. Soon, he will go down to the street and he will kill" (*M* 98).

Erostrate is never able to carry out his project. Rather than killing five people in a crowd, he almost accidentally kills one lone man. Pursued by the crowd and the police he takes his final refuge in the toilet of a cafe. There he is confronted with an immediate choice of exits: kill himself with his revolver as planned or open the door to the crowd. The decision to open the door is, paradoxically, a renunciation of his liberty. Perhaps the man he shot did not die—the great criminal would like his act to have no consequence. In abandoning himself to the crowd, he renounces everything he had earlier affirmed: "superiority," destruction, and freedom. His imaginary transcendence has been for nothing; his project vaporizes when it leaves the closed room.

Lulu, on the other hand, does not even think or plan a project, but lets herself be carried by images and sensations. In making the "decision" to leave her husband, she explains to him: "It's the tide that carries you away, it's life; one can neither judge nor understand, there's nothing to do but let yourself go" (*M* 147). The actions taken by Lulu consist essentially of moving from the bedroom she shares with her husband to a hotel room her lover reserves for her (from whence they intend to depart for Nice), and then back to the bedroom. The reader shares Lulu's point of view only within these two rooms, each dominated by the actual or virtual presence of a man; the intervening scenes at the Dôme café and the Samaritaine department store are presented from the point of view of her friend Rirette. Thus Lulu's passivity in relation to others is assured.

Lulu's relation to space is emotive or sensational rather than symbolic. As its title announces, "Intimité" begins in the cozy atmosphere of a conjugal bed, heavy with bodily odors and sensations, introspection, sensual memories. The room's "intimate" nature permits Lulu not to communicate with her husband, but to let herself plunge into an inner world, expressed in the narrative by a superficially Joycean interior monologue that telescopes time

(Lulu's past, present, and future) through sensation. We have here an ironic version of the romantic cell *à deux*. Rather than finding a freedom of the soul within imprisonment through subjective meditation and love, Lulu permits herself to sink into the irresponsible, cozy captivity of the body-prison. What appeals to her in the impotent Henri is precisely his "big captive body": his inability to act. Loudly proclaiming to Rirette that she is freeing herself from her husband, Lulu does everything in her power to retrap herself. During their shopping trip she invents excuses to return to Montparnasse so that she will "accidently" meet Henri coming home from work. Alone in her hotel room she imagines Henri in the bedroom and goes back—but only to say goodbye. She manages to let Henri know the address of the hotel so that the couple's neighbors will be able to find her and convince her to return to her suffering husband. The bedroom, domain of incarnation,[15] sensation, inaction, and irresponsibility, thus exerts a kind of fatal charm over Lulu. Her attempt at freedom was never anything more than a circuitous route back to captivity, which she can now comfortably believe is forced on her by duty.

Lulu's extended body-prison and Paul Hilibert's symbolic meditation cell (the former may be viewed as metonymical, the latter as metaphorical) evolve into new forms in *La Nausée* and *Chemins de la liberté*. The space inhabited by Antoine Roquentin is a maze of streets bounded by the limits of a city and containing various significant enclosures. Roquentin is a wanderer, but a wanderer within the limits of Bouville except for an excursion to Paris, perceived only as a hotel room where he meets his former mistress, Anny. Alone in the streets of Bouville, Roquentin experiences Heideggerian *Gelassenheit:* abandoned (*délaissé*) in the present. The closed places he seeks out—the library, his room, cafés—function as refuges from his growing anguish, his sense of reality as irremediably present. In his room, looking at old photographs, Roquentin observes, "I let myself flow into the past" (*N* 52). Passing in front of bars, he hopes, "maybe those sealed-off places . . . still enclosed a small part of yesterday's world, isolated, forgotten" (*N* 114). The municipal library, where Roquentin pursues his research on the marquis de Rollebon, is his principal place of refuge, an attempt at sequestration in the past.

During the course of the novel, however, the closed spaces sought by Roquentin appear to refuse to serve as refuges and begin

to function instead, not unlike Pascal's room, as sites that reveal to him the reality of his present condition. In one of the cafés Roquentin frequents, his consciousness becomes focused on a M. Fasquelle, probably dying in a room above. Thus death, if obliquely, appears as a limit to his situation. In the library, the "autodidacte's" method of reading books in alphabetical order suddenly reveals to him the absurdity of that institution's ordering of the world. However, it is in his own room, just when apparently safely immersed in the past, writing on de Rollebon, that Roquentin has his first great revelation of his own situation in the present (*N* 135–41). This scene, variation on a familiar cellular theme, might be called "the death of Rollebon and the resurrection of Roquentin." It precedes the more renowned chestnut tree episode, but is just as much a turning point in Roquentin's metaphysical evolution. What Roquentin experiences is in fact an existential lesson in phenomenology.

> I looked around me anxiously: the present, nothing but present . . . light and solid pieces of furniture, encrusted into their present, a table, a bed, a mirrored wardrobe—and I myself . . . the past did not exist. . . . Now, I knew: things are entirely what they seem—and *behind them* . . . there is nothing. (*N* 137)

The room that had served as refuge and protection, offering the security of an imaginary past, reveals itself through Roquentin's consciousness as pure present. It is no longer a sanctuary for the revival of de Rollebon, but a setting for the existence of Antoine Roquentin. As if pushed out to wander the streets in search of what to do with his liberty, Roquentin exits. Now, however, he must wander with the knowledge that he cannot "retreat" to the room: self-awareness has made refuge impossible.

Roquentin tries out one more place of refuge in the course of the novel, the hotel room in Paris where he goes to meet his former mistress. He is shocked immediately because of the room's bareness. In the past, Anny, an actress, decorated whatever room she inhabited with her own paraphernalia, transforming it into a kind of imaginary sanctuary, a setting for "perfect moments." Strewn with shawls and sprayed with perfume, Anny's room would offer the sensuous, "feminine" counterpart of his former symbolic and intellectual retreat in Bouville. Now Anny has applied none of

her art, the room is cold and empty, resembling, as Roquentin notes, his own. Anny, we learn, has been through her own existential crisis. She no longer believes in "perfect moments," or in the suspension and transformation of the present; what remains is mere day-by-day existence. Roquentin's comprehension of her loss confirms his experience of existence in Bouville.

The personage of the "self-taught man" in *La Nausée* functions in part as a burlesque double of Roquentin. There are parallels in their lives: the attempted sequestration in the past, in books, and the bursting of this illusion, which leads to the freedom of the present. In the self-taught man's case the latter will occur when he is evicted from the library by the Corsican guard for attempting to caress a boy. One significant account from the self-taught man's life curiously seems to anticipate the experience of his author. To Roquentin's (and the reader's) surprise, the orderly little man reveals that he had been a prisoner of war in 1917. As many prisoners reconverted in the camp to the faith of their youth, the self-taught man, we learn, there discovered his faith in humanity.

> But in the concentration camp, I learned to believe in men. . . . All those men were there, you could barely see them but you could feel them against you, you could hear them breathing . . . suddenly, a powerful feeling of joy surged up in me and I almost fainted. Then I felt that I loved those men like brothers, I would have liked to embrace them all. (*N* 162)

Although Sartre obviously is making a parody here of a certain petit-bourgeois version of virile fraternity or of Jules Romains's "unanimous life," this text reads like an ironic precursor of Sartre's description of his own prison camp experience in "Les Peintures de Giacometti." In that essay, the image of the camp imposes itself on the present reality of a café; in *La Nausée* the present space of the restaurant where the self-taught man and Roquentin are having lunch replaces the imaginary one of the concentration camp. Under questioning from Roquentin, his companion insists that he has the same love for everyone in the room. Roquentin's reaction to this prefigures the "other side" of camp life described by Sartre in "Les Peintures de Giacometti" as well as the prisons of *Huis clos* and of Frantz von Gerlach. Leaving the

café, Roquentin feels the intensity of the others' look and undergoes a symbolic metamorphosis:

> I don't need to turn around to know that they are looking at me through the windows: they are looking at my back with surprise and disgust. . . . Suddenly, I lost the appearance of a man and they saw a crab escaping backwards from this all too human room. (*N* 174)

The autodidact will have his own experience of the judgmental look of others, the rejection from refuge, the dreadful freedom of the streets. In the final pages of the novel, Roquentin envisages him wandering through the city, not daring to stop.

> He walks, he has to walk. If he stopped for one instant, the high walls of the library would suddenly rise up around him, would shut him in; the Corsican would appear at his side and the scene would begin again, exactly the same, in all its details, and the woman would sneer: "That filth ought to be in jail." He walks, he does not want to go back home: the Corsican is waiting for him in his room along with the woman and the two young men. (*N* 238)

The *ur*-image of the POW camp, which imposed itself for the self-taught man on the warm café and reading room, is replaced (at least in Roquentin's account) by that of the convict prison. Other human beings are no longer fellow prisoners, united in a common effort, but judges, jailers. The walls of the library no longer protect but threaten. Roquentin sees the self-made man as having experienced enclosure as revelation of existence and solitude after believing it to be refuge and solidarity, just as he has done.

Roquentin, however, is allowed a last revelation of a different order in another café, *Le Rendez-Vous des Cheminots.* He is seated at a table alone, conscious of his solitude, but the others there—his sometime mistress, Mme Jeanne, and the waitress, Madeleine—are perceived more as a benign background than as a hostile presence. The dialogue established is no longer between Roquentin and others, but between Roquentin and the record, "Some of These Days." The jazz tune does not exist, it *is;* it is possible to transcend existence through creation; Roquentin will (perhaps) write a novel. In this half-ironic form of Proustian transcendence, Roquentin's experience of enclosure/rejection ends.

La Nausée may be seen as a modernist novel, structured more spatially than temporally. Roquentin's perception of closed spaces proceeds through a dialectic that determines the narrative: enclosure as refuge and sequestration in the past is opposed by enclosure as revelation of existence and *regard* of others; from these emerges the synthesis of enclosure as revelation of the possibility of transcendence. The final imaginary space that Roquentin imposes on the café is a dark, stifling room on the twentieth story of a building in New York where a jazz composer is working out "Some of These Days."

Roquentin's successor, Mathieu Delarue, as his name suggests, is most often found wandering the streets of Paris. The topography of the first volume of *Les Chemins de la liberté, L'Age de raison,* consists in large part not of *chemins* but of *rues,* Parisian streets that inevitably lead to enclosures: apartments, rooms, taxis, museums, night clubs, cafés. Mathieu tends to formulate his situation lexically in spatial terms. He perceives himself in a "cage without bars" (*AR* 143), walled (*muré*) (*AR* 234), walled-in (*enmuré*) (*AR* 305); he searches for an exit. His primary situation-trap consists of his mistress Marcelle's pregnancy; one possible "exit" is an abortion. In the hopes of attaining this, Mathieu sends his Jewish friend Sarah to ask a Jewish gynecologist for credit for his services. Sarah comes to Mathieu's apartment with the reply:

> "He told me, 'I'll never give them credit, they made us suffer too much over there.' And it's true, you know, I almost understand him. He spoke to me about Jews from Vienna, concentration camps. I didn't want to believe him . . ." Her voice choked: "they were martyrized." (*AR* 324)

Behind Mathieu's sordid little private situation there stands already, if barely suggested, a larger social reality. Mathieu is an outsider because he has not suffered. As a European non-Jew he is already unconsciously involved in a collective guilt. In fact, Mathieu's social-political situation in this novel is defined entirely in negative terms: in addition to being a non-Jew, he did *not* go to fight in the Spanish civil war and did *not* join the Communist party. The concentration camp, mentioned only once and with no direct bearing on the narrative, stands nonetheless as an index of the theme to be developed in the subsequent volumes. It is impos-

sible to remain individual, free, and private: one's own little cage is enmeshed in historical *encagement.*

Mathieu's search for a way out of his situation most often leads him to rooms, apartments, and cafés, all dead ends. His life as it is portrayed in *L'Age de raison* is centered primarily on two topographical spaces: Marcelle's room, "the pink room" in which, after a prelude on the street, the novel opens, and Mathieu's apartment, especially his room, "the green room" in which it closes. In the course of this volume Mathieu will discover that his cherished, illusory freedom consists primarily of a coming and going between these two poles of his existence.

Marcelle's room, invariable, is so metaphorized that it hardly seems a referential space at all; indeed Marcelle herself is one of Sartre's most unreal characters. We are to believe that the woman practically never goes out and thus, through the consciousness of both Mathieu and Daniel, we perceive her and her room as one or, in terms of the metaphor used, as a crustacean and its shell. When Mathieu learns of Marcelle's pregnancy he perceives the air of her room as "sugary" and pink, unbreathable. Marcelle herself testifies to Sartre's gynophobia: vaguely ill, she is fat, aging, and pregnant as well. The shell-room, like Lulu's bedroom, serves as a metonymy for a bad case of incarnation, a triple body-prison. Mathieu seems threatened by her room as by a giant oyster (a giant vagina?) ready to trap him in its carnality.

Mathieu's own apartment threatens him with another form of confinement. It first appears when Mathieu's disciple Boris expresses surprise that, since Mathieu is so "free," he has a place of his own. A few minutes later Mathieu's friend, the Communist Brunet arrives, but refuses to sit in one of Mathieu's armchairs because "your armchairs are corrupting" (*AR* 145). He refers to Mathieu's place as his "cave" (*ton antre*). Mathieu cannot accept Brunet's offer to join him in the party, yet Brunet represents to him the outside world and reality, from which he is cut off. When Brunet is in Mathieu's room, it seems real; when Brunet leaves, the reality of the room disappears (*AR* 150, 156). Focusing his awareness on objects in the room, Mathieu meditates on Brunet's departure:

> Mathieu looked at his green, corrupting armchair, his chairs, his green curtains. He thought: "He will no longer sit

> on my chairs, he will no longer look at my curtains while rolling a cigarette." The room had become nothing but a spot of green light trembling at the passing of a bus. Mathieu approached the window and leaned on the balcony. He thought: "I couldn't accept," and the room was behind him like still water, there was only his head coming out of the water, the corrupting room was behind him. (*AR* 156)

Mathieu's room thus acquires the metaphorical values of water and light, the figures for consciousness in *L'Etre et le néant.* It is however *still* water and *green* light: a consciousness that does not project but which ruminates, the sterile lucidity of the nonengaged intellectual. The figure is carried further by Mathieu's perception of the little girl jumping rope, who seems as if she will jump rope eternally, and of the light outside: "It was a light of the end of hope, it eternalized whatever it touched" (*AR* 157). Not to be *dans le coup* is to ir-realize, to see life as if it were eternal. The philosopher's room stands at the opposite extreme from the oyster woman's body-prison: it is a trap of consciousness and lucidity. Yet its green color also indicates not Mathieu's freedom, but a hope that is not altogether dead.

In the center of the novel, during the crucial scene in the Sumatra night club, Mathieu experiences a kind of revelation that sets his life before him both in spatial metaphors and in reference to his topographical situation. He will marry Marcelle; his life, which has been nothing, will completely close in around him.

> Slowly, surely, at the whim of my moods and my laziness, I have secreted my shell. And now, it's finished, I'm walled in everywhere! In the center, there's my apartment with me inside, in the midst of my green leather armchairs, outside there's the rue de la Gaité, one way because I always go down it, the avenue du Maine and the whole of Paris encircling me, north in front, south behind, the Pantheon on the right, the Eiffel tower on the left, the gate of Clignancourt facing me and, in the middle of rue Vercingétorix, a little pink satin hole, Marcelle's room, and Marcelle, my wife, is inside, naked, waiting for me. (*AR* 234)

The poles of his existence are not only bounded by the *quartier* but, as in concentric circles, by the borders of Paris, of France.

Even if Mathieu leaves these boundaries to travel far, he will not escape his confinement because his room has become for him, as much as Marcelle's for her, a shell: "wherever I go I bring my shell with me, I stay home in my room, in the midst of my books. . . . If I suddenly arrived in Marrakesh, I would still be in my room, at home. . . . In my room. Forever" (*AR* 235). The room, Mathieu's little shell lit by green light, defines his life in entirely negative terms, his nonaction, what he has *not* done to break the shell.

Mathieu finds himself then in the center of a kind of magnetic field between his shell-room and Marcelle's. The young girl, Ivich, who Mathieu perceives as having "no shell" appears in contrast to Marcelle to be all consciousness and no body. Ivich's judgment of Mathieu is another force confining him. Having left her, angrily, in his room, headed toward Marcelle's house, Mathieu perceives the two women in his life in terms of the two central places in his life. "Behind him in a green room, an angry little consciousness was pushing him away with all its might. In front of him, in a pink room, a motionless woman was waiting for him, smiling with hope" (*AR* 327). With this perception of his situation in space, Mathieu searches desperately for another way out. "At the end of the world, beyond the buildings and the streets, there was a closed door" (*AR* 329). The closed door leads to the room of the cabaret singer, Lola; it contains the money that Mathieu has not been able to obtain elsewhere; and he has the key. Mathieu makes a last, desperate attempt to get out (characteristically by way of a "closed door"): he goes to Lola's and steals the money.

Mathieu's decision and act, however, in conformity with the rest of his life, turns out to be a gesture without consequences. Marcelle refuses the money for the abortion: the homosexual Daniel informs Mathieu that he is going to marry her. In the last scene of the book, with Daniel in his apartment, Mathieu perceives through a consciousness of his surroundings that Marcelle was *not* the only cause of his closed-in state.

> "The truth is that I have abandoned Marcelle for nothing." He stared at the window curtains that were blowing in the evening breeze. He was tired.
> "For nothing," he said again. "In this whole story, I have only been refusal and negation: Marcelle is no longer in my life, but there's all the rest."

"What?"
Mathieu vaguely pointed at his desk.
"All that, all the rest." (*AR* 375)

One of the poles of Mathieu's topography has disappeared and with it the desperate search for a "way out," but this has succeeded only in unmasking the profound nature of his confinement. The green room has triumphed.

Mathieu continues his struggle with the green room in the second volume of the novel but he and it are no longer at the center. The second type of topographical prison, the collective "closed world," dominates the remaining volumes of Sartre's war novel. The topography of *Le Sursis* may be viewed as a tension between various individual shells or cells and the collective imprisonment of the war threatening to break out all over Europe. Heavily influenced by Dos Passos, Sartre moves rapidly from character to character, story to story, place to place: we are in streets, rooms, hotels, cafés, restaurants, trains, ships. The war in some way contributes to the creation of a *situation* for each person. Philippe, the pacificist, in his attempt to resist the collective destiny, runs from one sordid hotel room to another. Afraid (like Mathieu but for different reasons) to pass the border into Spain, he ends up in a prison cell, having turned himself in as a deserter. Ivich, "sequestered" as she had feared in *L'Age de raison* by her family in Laon, perceives herself as cut off from what is "really happening" outside. Her room, filled with smoke and the odors of tea, is a "prison" (*Su* 285); she determines to leave it. "And now the street had become a prison too; nothing was happening there, the facades of the houses were blind and flat, all the shutters closed, the war was elsewhere" (*Su* 287). Ivich's flight, like that of Philippe, is in a sense from cell to cell. She runs away to Paris, to Mathieu's apartment; she ends up in the room and the bed of a boy she cares nothing about.

In contrast to those who are waiting or running, the situation of those directly touched by the impending war appears in some cases as a collective prison. One significant space is the crowded train car in which a group of invalids are being transported, passively, not knowing why or where. The reader perceives the scene through the consciousness of the chronic invalid Charles, who falls in love with an Austrian woman named Catherine as a result of

their conversation in the dark train car. Together, they look at the light on the wall opposite them and the shadows that pass on it. Charles observes that one of the shadows is a tree; Catherine thinks that it may be a telephone pole. The dialogue continues:

> "All things considered," he said, "we're not so badly off here."
> "There's some air," she said, "and then, those shadows passing take your mind off things."
> "Do you remember the myth of the cave?"
> "No. What is the myth of the cave?"
> "It's about slaves. They're tied up at the back of a cave. They see shadows on the wall."
> "Why were they tied up there?"
> "I don't know. It's Plato who wrote that."
> "Oh! Yes! Plato . . ." she said vaguely. (*Su* 195)

Thus Sartre superimposes Plato's image of the eternal human condition on a contingent situation, with the elusive war replacing the world of Ideas. It is the historical process that is beyond the reach of individuals to understand but that makes them all in some sense prisoners of war.

Mathieu Delarue, drafted without being very sure of where or why he will fight, also finds himself confined with others in a train car. The collective situation leads Mathieu to experience a new sense of almost Malrucian fraternity as he observes his fellow soldiers: "they were yawning, sleeping, playing cards . . . but they had a destiny, like kings, like dead people. A crushing destiny mixed with the heat, the fatigue, and the buzzing of flies: the train car, sealed up like an oven, barricaded by the sun and by its speed, was jolting them along towards the same adventure" (*Su* 325).

It seems at this point that Mathieu has won his battle with the green room. Just before taking the train, he made a decision *not* to spend the night in his apartment, pronouncing the Sartrean formula, "Freedom is exile and I am condemned to be free" (*Su* 286). Yet all of the destinies newly shaped by the war are transformed when Daladier and Chamberlain make "peace" with Hitler in Munich. Upon hearing the news, Mathieu loses his newfound sense of fraternity and collective destiny. Wondering what he will now do with his life, he envisions a familiar place.

> It was simple: there was in Paris, on rue Huyghens, an apartment waiting for him, two rooms, central heating, water, gas, electricity, with green armchairs and a bronze crab on the table. . . . His old familiar life was waiting for him, he had left it in his desk, in his bedroom. (*Su* 349)

His individual life awaits him; it is as if nothing had happened. The reader is of course aware that events are not as they appear and that Mathieu and the others will be swept into the collective destiny again, but the novel's central figure seems for the time being reabsorbed in his private cell-shell.

Sartre originally had planned to conclude *Les Chemins* with a third volume, leading Mathieu, Daniel, and Brunet, by different roads, to an authentic liberty.[16] Unable to realize his project in a single volume, he published the third in the series, *La Mort dans l'âme*, and began, but for various reasons never completed, the fourth, which was to have been entitled *La Dernière chance*.[17] An extract from this last was published in *Les Temps modernes* under the title *Drôle d'amitié*. Thus *Les Chemins de la liberté* as published terminates in a prison camp: the second part of *La Mort dans l'âme* takes place in a camp administered by the Germans in France and *Drôle d'amitié* is set in a German stalag.

According to the fragments of *La Dernière chance*, for both Mathieu and Brunet the road to freedom was to pass through, indeed to take its decisive turn in, the stalag where they were to meet again, compare the roads they had taken, and then each invent a final exit. Fragments from Sartre's postwar journal, which he entitled "La Morts dans l'âme," make it clear that his own experience of captivity in the stalag near Trier was transposed into accounts of Brunet's and Mathieu's. Camp life is seen there as a kind of quintessence of the situation in France after the 1940 defeat: the prisoners are "survivors," neither really dead nor really alive, existing in a kind of eternal present in which they are helpless to act. And yet, Sartre reflects, the prison camp (opposed to a civil central prison) is paradoxically on top of a mountain, a mountain from which one can observe roads extending to the horizon, so that "our glance is freer than we are."[18] (Jean-Baptiste Clamence would have been in his element in this prison from which one seemed able to dominate.)

The parallel between defeated and occupied France and

prison camp existence develops in *La Mort dans l'âme*, the first half of which portrays the "death in the soul" of seven individuals after June 1940, with the second half focusing on the capture and captivity of Brunet. The second part opens without any temporal or spatial referent and in the midst of an interior monologue. Suddenly we are plunged inside Brunet, the man of collectivity, the man without a first name, one of the few characters in *Les Chemins de la liberté* viewed heretofore entirely from without.

In the course of the fifty-page first paragraph, we follow Brunet into a basement hideout from which he is rejected, we learn that he is an officer who has lost all his men, and we see him enter a village and be taken prisoner with a large and disparate group of French soldiers. The unbroken paragraph, the pieces of dialogue, the nonportrayal of the Germans, and the vagueness of the situation contribute to the effect described by Brunet as "it's like a movie, nothing looks real" (*MA* 203). We then follow the long march of the defeated men through villages and forests to the barracks that will be their temporary prison. In Brunet's consciousness they are a formless mass, "the material," and he is the one who will have to "work" on them. Without the party behind him Brunet feels more alone than he has for "ten years" (we are not told why) but he takes upon himself the responsibility for representing the party and "working" on the men.

The entry into the barracks where the crowd of men will remain for several days grouped together in the courtyard, is perceived in terms of a death and burial. "Dead, forgotten, buried in an outdated war, the crowd marches forward . . . they are going to bury between those walls their dingy old war" (*MA* 210). Here as in other prison "deaths" duration gives way to an eternal present: "they are running away from the past and the near future in an uncomfortable and temporary little death" (*MA* 211). The "herd" is not allowed the dignity of the death and resurrection of Malraux's prisoners. Their "little death" becomes a glassy-eyed waiting. They are shown ignobly grasping at slices of bread thrown at them by the Germans and then, once fed, reborn not to a new life but to an imitation of what used to be their everyday life. "One mouthful of bread, and that sinister courtyard where a vanquished army lay dying was changed into a beach, a solarium, a fair. . . . They have made for themselves a synthetic Sunday" (*MA* 241). Cut off from the real world, the "troupe" reproduces a facsimile of

that world: a theatrical production complete with church decor, Sunday afternoon decor, and accounts of "usual" Sunday evenings absorbing past experience into an eternal present.

Against the large rhythm of the death and re-creation of the crowd plays the subjectively experienced death and reconstruction of Brunet. The man of action, for whom precise meetings were of prime importance, begins a struggle with a more childish, primitive experience of time in captivity. "For the first time in fifteen years, a day goes by slowly; finishing in a beautiful evening with nothing to do. An old feeling of leisure comes up from his childhood; there is the sky, against the wall, pink, close by, useless" (*MA* 218). As in other prisons, the perception of slowed time produced by the experience of restricted space is accompanied by a vision of unrestricted space: it is as if the sky only can be perceived as sky from prison. Leisure and uselessness—Brunet fights against both sensations by trying to give himself "work": seeking out party comrades and setting up precise meeting times. Yet he finds himself unable to keep pace with objective time. " 'Four thirty-five and I haven't done anything. I thought it was ten in the morning.' It seemed to him that time had been stolen from him" (*MA* 234). The process culminates when Brunet, like the others, is put into one of the little stalls in the attic of the barracks—described as empty cases without windows but with skylights, separated from each other by bars—a place that seems more Sartre's invention than part of a prison camp. In this cell-like structure, Brunet descends into an inner world and, most uncharacteristically, perceives the space around him metaphorically.

> The shadow of the bars slides slowly onto the floor, slides and turns on the bodies lying on their backs, climbs the boxes, turns, turns, grows pale. Night rises along the wall; through the bars, the attic window looks like a pale bruise, a dark bruise and then, suddenly, a twinkling, limpid eye. The bars start turning around again, the shadow turns like a beacon, the beast is encaged, men move about for a moment then disappear; the boat leaves shore with all the convicts dead of hunger in their cages.[19] (*MA* 237)

Illness, slippage into the domain of the body, and the evocation of an inner world usually receive a most unsympathetic treatment by Sartre—especially if the body is female. In Brunet's case,

however, it seems that his lyrical transcendence, his lapse into the subjectivity to which he is ideologically opposed, are necessary to decompose a personality constructed on false certitudes. We believe Brunet's semiconscious surge of childhood sensations: "the swarming of the sun on the leaves of the chestnut trees, the rain of the sun on my forehead" (*MA* 238); we do not believe his affirmation after he has eaten some soup and recovered: "Childhood, love, 'subjectivity', that was nothing" (*MA* 239). As in the case of Kassner in *Le Temps du mépris* and Rubashov in *Darkness at Noon*, the romantic cell reaffirms its continuity within the collective prison. The process of breaking through Brunet's armor, to use Sartre's metaphor, has begun. It will be brought to completion through the mediation of Brunet's significantly named new friend, Schneider.[20]

The second long (thirty-page) paragraph of the second part of *La Mort dans l'âme* is devoted to the contrapuntal themes of Brunet's attempt to "work" on the men in the group and his developing individual relationship with Schneider. Schneider, who carried Brunet to the stall where he plunged into his dream world, appears to help Brunet with his activities, but relates to him on a level beyond the political. Whereas the first long paragraph described the (collective and individual) entry into the prison-world and the shocks of adjustment, the second takes place entirely within it. Brunet moves between two principal settings: the communal stall where he is now lodged with a group of men and the courtyard.

Brunet's "work" consists essentially of attempting to create a collective consciousness of resistance to the Nazis, but he becomes more and more disillusioned. His discouragement culminates in the stall as he hears one of the men explain to the others that there is nothing to do but wait, since Hitler himself has promised to free them. Exasperated, Brunet attempts to walk out into the courtyard, but night has fallen and he suddenly realizes that the door will be closed. His despair expresses itself in spatial terms: "For the first time, he feels that he's a prisoner. Sooner or later, he will have to go back into his jail, lie down on the floor next to the others, and listen to their dreams" (*MA* 280–81). The prisoners, Brunet now thinks, can be freed only by a worse imprisonment: if Hitler deports them, their hopes will no longer crystallize around the Nazis but around the party. (The irony here is that Brunet does not yet

know of the Soviet-German nonaggression pact.) Thus the second section ends with a curious refrain: "Vivement l'Allemagne!"

The third long paragraph, the final section of the novel, takes place entirely in a crowded train car transporting the prisoners toward an "unknown destination." The space as described recalls the "cave" of invalids in *Le Sursis* and the train of soldiers at the end of *L'Age de raison* as well as the actual packed trains of prisoners that had become a feature of the European landscape. Here more than elsewhere the group is a collectivity, pressed tightly together, feeling hope and despair as one. Brunet, however, is not entirely with them—his thoughts are with a comrade who jumped off and killed himself when he suspected the train was headed toward Germany and who thus seemed to disprove Brunet's theory that worse imprisonment would further his work. His feelings are more with the individual presence of Schneider than with the mass; his apprenticeship in subjectivity continues. Whereas Mathieu's train ride crystallized his new experience of collectivity, Brunet's becomes a metaphor for his particular situation: "he is passing through, his thought is passing through in his head, the train is passing through France" (*MA* 298).

Drôle d'amitié opens six months later in a stalag in Germany. Time, in prison fashion, has condensed itself into an "eternal soup": "six months of stalag and a single morning, always the same one that comes back every morning, darker and darker, colder and colder, deeper and deeper" (*DA* 1462). Brunet's personal and political selves seem to have found two corresponding spaces: his warm room lit by a coal stove and the cold barracks inhabited by seventeen comrades, including Schneider. Brunet accomplishes his desire to bring Schneider from the cold to the warm space when the latter falls sick. When Schneider is there, Brunet feels, "one feels at home, sheltered" (*DA* 1478).

This reasonably happy balance is shattered by the arrival of a new prisoner, Chalais, an important Communist party official. Chalais "unmasks" Schneider as a certain Vicarios, a traitor who left the party at the time of the Soviet-German pact and who was accused of giving information to the governor-general in Algeria. He also informs Brunet that the "work" he has been doing has no basis in current party doctrine: rather than directing the prisoners' sentiments against the Nazis, Brunet should have been turning them against the British imperialists and against the war. The Soviet-

German pact thus effects a *situation-limite* to which Brunet must react. The situation expresses itself topographically when Chalais, replacing Brunet as party spokesman for the group, succeeds in effectively confining the latter to his room. Brunet considers escaping from the prison camp but Chalais informs him that this would be the worst objective solution since the men would think that he had left in protest to party doctrine. It is thus in defiance to the party that Brunet "invents his exit": escape *with* Schneider/Vicarios. His last words to his dying friend confirm his emancipation: "I don't give a damn about the party: you're my only friend" (*DA* 1534).

The fragments from *La Dernière chance* make it clear that Brunet was to undergo yet another prison ordeal before being able to set out on his road to liberty. Recaptured, he is sent to prison within the camp where he fears "the cell, the night, madness" (*DC* 1628). Once released, Brunet is reunited with Mathieu, who is now heading an organization that helps prisoners to escape from the stalag. The two men reach an agreement that, if Brunet assumes responsibility for the murder of Moûlu, the traitor responsible for his arrest but strangled by Mathieu's men, Mathieu will arrange Brunet's escape. Thus Brunet's escape from the camp (where he could have stayed to help Mathieu) is not mere escapism but a step toward freedom-as-responsibility. We do not know how Brunet's story was to end, but Mathieu advises him to continue to work from within the party once back in France.

Although Mathieu's story also was never completed, it obviously interested Sartre more than Brunet's. In the fragments of *La Dernière chance*, and in what can be surmised from the outlines of the unfinished novel, Mathieu's nascent liberty appears as a series of confinement/escape juxtapositions, often in terms suggesting the familiar prison *topos* of death/rebirth. The fourth volume of *Chemins de la liberté* was to open with a sequence centered on Mathieu, thus interrupting the Brunet story continued from *La Mort dans l'âme* in *Drôle d'amitié*. In the fragment written for this part, Mathieu (presumed by the reader to be dead after the final shooting scene in part 1 of *La Mort dans l'âme*) is found recovering in the hospital of the prison camp that (we later learn) houses Brunet. As if outlining a *situation-limite*, an inmate who has lost his legs advises Mathieu to escape: "A prisoner has to escape; he's made for that" (*DC* 1588). Mathieu, however, en-

visions his liberty forming through a different process. He now wants no part of the freedom he left back in Paris, the freedom "for nothing" of the green room. At the opposite pole from Brunet, the bourgeois individualist has discovered collectivity and solidarity; he prefers, he tells his fellow inmate, male wartime comradeship to mere civilian freedom to "screw women." The feeling of togetherness achieved while shooting the Germans—this has been his great moment of liberation and this is what he finds preserved, or prolonged, in collective prison spaces, first in the hospital and then in the stalag. " 'In a sense . . . ,' he confides, 'I have never felt so free as I have since I've been here' " (*DC* 1589).

Like his creator, Mathieu was to discover liberty and to undergo the experience of death and rebirth behind barbed wire while acquiring the insight of "Les Peintures de Giacometti" that camp solidarity is in a sense the opposite of city solitude. Sartre gives Mathieu foreknowledge of the process as, from the hospital, he looks up to the camp on the hill as toward an earthly paradise: "Behind the barracks, inside the barbed wire, they had built and peopled for him a native city" (*DC* 1593). Upon his arrival at the camp, we learn, "he had just been born" (*DC* 1596). Sartre's treatment of the *topos* here seems close to that of Malraux. One may surmise that *Bariona*, spectacle for the nativity, was written from the same impulse.

Before being fully "reborn," that is, before starting his "road to liberty," Mathieu was to undergo a second initiatory death (the first was in the shooting scene) in the prison camp. A commonplace metaphor for all prison existence, "death" in the stalag is clearly of a different order from "death" in the concentration camp. One of Mathieu's companions tells him that it is in part the lack of suffering that is deathlike, the feeling that one is simply maintained, that there is no struggle, no project, no future. These conditions nevertheless form an ideal *situation-limite* for Mathieu. He must create his own rebirth through his choice, either to escape (Sartre calls it in one of the outlines, "la porte ouverte comme menace permanent" [*DC* 2142]) or to stay and to act within the camp, *s'engager*. Just as escape was appropriate for Brunet, the man of collectivity moving toward individuality, so the opposite is appropriate for Mathieu. By forming an organization that helps others to escape, he is able to work for freedom in collectivity. He thus acts out what Sartre describes in his letter to Camus: *engage-*

ment consists in uniting one's fellows to break through a common *encagement.* Sartre evidently intended to recapitulate this situation by having Mathieu later work for the Resistance, "free" under the Occupation as he had been "free" in the stalag. Creating a positive, inevitably didactic model of freedom, however, proved to be impossible, especially as the complexities of postwar history seem to have given the "freedom" of the Occupation and even of the prison camp an aura of nostalgia.

Representations of collective confinements in "closed worlds" and the dialogue between encagement/engagement also appear in Sartre's theater, primarily in *Les Mouches* and *Le Diable et le bon Dieu.* On the whole, however, Sartre's plays are best suited to what I have defined as the third category of his topographical prisons, the collective or solitary cellular enclosures that constitute the only settings of an entire work. This inherently dramatic type of setting also dominates the first two stories in Sartre's collection *Le Mur* whose titles—"Le Mur" and "La Chambre"—testify to the importance they accord to topography.

"Une littérature pour la séquestrée de Poitiers," Robert Brasillach called *Le Mur* in his review.[21] Sartre, who certainly knew Gide's presentation of the case of Mélanie Bastian, victim of twenty-five years of sequestration in her room, her bed, and her filth, may or may not have been influenced by *La Séquestrée de Poitiers.*[22] Yet Brasillach, although not for the reasons he states (the young philosophy professor, like Mélanie, would seem to enjoy wallowing in filth) was correct in his rapprochement. Gide presents Mélanie both as victim and as a kind of Pascalian heroine, choosing as epigraph the *pensée* on the room. "One should live and die in a cell all one's life," the sequestered girl had inscribed on her wall. Sartre's stories exhibit the same attraction/repulsion for the closed room that tends to function both as Pascalian revealer of truth and as Sartrean refuge in inauthenticity. The title story is the only work of Sartre's besides *Morts sans sépulture* to take place entirely within a real, if makeshift, prison. Although it is about political prisoners held by the fascists during the Spanish civil war, "Le Mur" has practically no political or social content. Indeed all outside reality appears only as a vague memory within the miniature *concentrationnaire* universe consisting of interrogation rooms, courtyards, and corridors, with the hospital basement room serving as cell for the condemned prison-

ers Pablo, Tom, and Juan at its center. The configuration of space in this prison-world consists of a series of enclosures in which the events of the present narrative take place, doubled by an imaginary series outside of the narrative time. The configuration may be seen briefly in the following outline:

Topography of narrative	Imaginary spaces
1. "the big white room" (where prisoners are interrogated)	"the cellar"; "the cell" (Pablo thinks of the hospital basement room where he is presently imprisoned and of the cell in the archbishopric where he spent the preceding five days.)
2. "the cellar" (principal setting of the story)	"the cell" (Pablo's former cell again) "the wall" (against which the prisoners will be executed) "the courtyard" (where the wall is) (The "wall" and the "courtyard" are imagined by Tom rather than Pablo.)
3. "a little room" (suffocating room where Pablo is interrogated)	"a tomb"; "the gravediggers' cabin" (Pablo's imaginary, "farcical" hideouts for Raymond Gris)
4. "the laundry room" (where Pablo is taken to "meditate" in between interrogations in the little room)	Raymond Gris's "real" hideout at his cousin's house
5. "the big courtyard" (where Pablo is put with other prisoners)	"the gravediggers' cabin" (revealed to be Gris's actual hideout, where he has just been shot)

The world of the condemned prisoners, communicated primarily through the consciousness of Pablo, is thus a boxed-in series of closed spaces where the concept "outside" in past, pres-

ent, or future terms becomes meaningless. To be sure, Pablo evokes some fleeting memories of his life before imprisonment, particularly of Concha, the woman he loves, but only to reflect on how they have lost all meaning for him. The closed world permits no *divertissement;* there is nothing to do but think about death. The space whose final closure is the death-wall becomes coextensive with the prisoners' situation. One of the rare metaphors in the text, used by Pablo, is a spatial one: "My life was before me, sealed off, closed like a sack" (*M* 27).

One important factor defining the prison-space is the relationship between the imprisoners, the outsiders (they, one) and the prisoners, the insiders (we). This is first stated in the opening lines of the text: "They pushed us into a big white room" (*M* 11). *They* exercise power, its impact is received by *us*, the big room preserves the relationship, reinforced by the presence of interrogators behind a table. The relationship is restated when Tom, Juan, and Pablo are taken to their cell: "When they brought us back, we sat down and we waited in silence" (*M* 13). *They* act; *we* wait passively. The prison, and at its core the dreaded wall, are extensions of *their* power over *us*. Yet if *they* hold the advantage in terms of power, *we* become capable of experiencing reality in a way *they* cannot share, from the inside, existentially. The major theme of the story unfolds itself primarily through Pablo's consciousness within the cell: the confrontation with the fact of death and consequent loss of the illusion of being eternal. It has been pointed out often how Sartre describes this awareness in terms of bodily sensations such as sweating and urinating. He also states it through Pablo's awareness of space and light.

Partly because of the stark nudity of the setting, physical description in "Le Mur" is minimal but the few details mentioned take on more than descriptive importance. We learn that, in addition to the door, the cell has five openings: four small side windows (*soupiraux*) and a hole in the ceiling through which coal was once poured into the basement. The door is not perceived as an exit; it is the space through which the prisoners are pushed, the entrance for the guards; it leads only to other prisons and finally to the wall. Through the four windows Pablo perceives the changing light from the outside world but through the hole he sees only the eternal and infinite vision of stars and night. As with other prisoners, time stops when Pablo meditates on the sky. There is a suggestion of

"cellular lyricism" in the romantic tradition as he evokes the "pure and glacial" night, the "superb" sky, the Big Dipper. This illusion, however, is broken by the Belgian doctor, the "living" outsider, who announces as if from another world that it is 3:30 A.M. After that, Tom goes under the opening and watches for dawn; Pablo feels time flowing, drop by drop. The time imposed by *them* is imposed on the timelessness of dying men; the last imaginary exit is blocked. Consciousness of space is now entirely of closed space, of the finality of the wall.

It is clear that Sartre could have ended "Le Mur" with Pablo's execution, an ending that, although it would have posed problems with the first person narration, would have meant greater economy and conciseness in the presentation of the theme. Why then did he carry the story to its farcical conclusion? The answer is perhaps more philosophical than aesthetic: Pablo, a *conscience prise au piège*, has not yet had the opportunity to attempt to exercise his liberty. He has taken the first step toward freedom, he has acquired a lucid awareness of his situation, and he must now attempt to invent an exit. In spatial terms, a new movement of the story begins, restating in brief form the first: Pablo is taken by "them" to a (warm, stuffy) room where he is interrogated and then put in the cellular laundry room "to think." Pablo's confinement represents exactly his *situation-limite*. Ostensibly, he has a choice between two ways out: he may reveal what he thinks is Raymond Gris's true hiding place and save his own skin, or he may refuse, thus *choosing* his own death rather than having it absurdly imposed on him. Pablo, however, invents another alternative that is really not an exit from his situation but a temporary transcendence of it. He will play a joke (*une farce*) on his interrogators, he will invent a hideout for Gris for the pleasure of seeing them run off to look. Pablo's joke, like his laugh at the end of the story, is a sign of defiance against the absurdity of his situation, a revolt that Sartre in 1967 judged as individualistic and politically naive.[23] In a story on the Spanish civil war, it is in fact surprising to note that the protagonist is about as politically *engagé* as Camus's Meursault, and in his own way a rebel against the absurd. Pablo's revolt against his own impending death is a piece of literal "graveyard humor." Raymond Gris, he declares, is hiding in the cemetery, in a tomb or in the gravediggers' cabin. Transcendence of the *situation-limite* takes the form of an imaginary closed space, also

surrounded by death, a parody, as it were, of his own spatial situation.

The last brief scene in the prison courtyard restates the spatial relationship between authorities and prisoners: "the soldiers took me away . . . they pushed about ten new prisoners into the courtyard" (*M* 37). It is another prisoner who unwittingly reveals to Pablo the cruel turn taken by his *farce:* Gris was found and shot in the gravediggers' cabin in the cemetery. Pablo's imaginary space, his joke on death, has become a real space with a real death. His revolt against the absurd finishes with a triumph of the absurd, consummated with his laugh.

The prison-world of "Le Mur," consisting of closed spaces within closed spaces is in a sense transferred to intimate, familial terms in "La Chambre." The configuration of narrative and imaginary spaces shows the similarities:

Topography of narrative	Imaginary spaces
1. Mme Darbédat's room	"their room" (room of Pierre and Eve) "Franchot's place" (a mental hospital with a big park and individual rooms, described by M. Darbédat)
2. a long, dark corridor in Eve's apartment	a light, sunny apartment near Auteuil (M. Darbédat's wish for his daughter)
3. "the room" (Pierre's room)	
4. Eve's living room	"Franchot's place"
5. the street	
6. Eve's living room, with attention to the wall separating it from Pierre's room	"the room" (mentioned six times)
7. "the room"	the "walls" of Franchot's hospital

With the exception of the brief scene in which M. Darbédat walks down the sunny street, the topography of "La Chambre" is like that of "Le Mur": a series of enclosures opening only to

imaginary enclosures and held together by the centripetal space indicated in the title, in this case a topographical as well as imaginary place. In this story, however, there are no tensions between "them" and "us" for the prisoners are self-sequestered and the walls around them extensions of their own, not others' choices. Each character in "La Chambre" seems to have a space assigned to him or her, a space belonging to and expressive of the owner but occasionally invaded by others.[24] Mme Darbédat and Pierre, whose bedrooms frame the story, are the most closely identified with their spaces; they never leave them. Eve's space is her *salon*, a room between the outside world of "normal people" and the closed-off mad world of Pierre, where she hopes to penetrate. M. Darbédat, whose spaces are the stairs and the sunny street, functions as a would-be breaker of enclosures. His main concern is to prevent the imprisonment of Eve with and by Pierre and to this end he proposes alternate spaces: Franchot's hospital for him and the sunny apartment near Auteuil for her. Darbédat is the principal *actor* in the story, but the result of his actions, Eve's sequestration with Pierre, is diametrically opposed to his intentions.

Mme Darbédat's room, as many critics have pointed out, is a Proustian space, where exquisite sensations and sensual memories are cultivated by its inhabitant. Prefiguring Marcelle, the confined invalid spends her days secreting precious pearls, making of her pink shell-room an extension of her body-prison. As the reader perceives the room from Mme Darbédat's point of view, the entrance of her husband appears as an intrusion into a private space. He is a breaker of her glass hothouse, a bear in her cage. The intrusion is nevertheless thoroughly foreseeable, a Thursday visit that has become a kind of "eternal soup" in Mme Darbédat's closed world. Before we witness the actual entrance of the husband, we are given a preview of his actions in the imperfect tense. "M. Darbédat filled [*emplissait*] the calm room with his presence. He did not sit down [*ne s'asseyait pas*], walked [*marchait*] up and down, turned [*tournait*] on himself. Each of his transports wounded [*blessait*] Mme Darbédat like a breaking of glass" (*M* 42). We are in the familiar prison world where action is needless repetition.

It is M. Darbédat who evokes a negative image of "the room," Pierre's space, to his wife. (Later he will compare her confining

illness to his.) He envisions their daughter Eve as sequestered with Pierre, never going out except to see her mother (from one confining space to another). Already suspicious of M. Darbédat's point of view because of his utter self-assurance and categorical judgments, the reader perceives through his disgust something of the sacred, transcendent quality of the mysterious room: "she never opens the window because Pierre doesn't want to . . . they burn incense, I think, some sort of junk in a perfume-pan, you'd think you were in a church" (*M* 44).

Proud of his youthful vitality as he climbs the 112 steps to Eve's apartment, M. Darbédat enters his daughter's space with the intention of freeing her, proposing that she move to a modern, sunny apartment. Eve opposes to this idea the obstacle of Pierre, who does not want to leave his room, and together father and daughter enter the madman's sanctuary. Darbédat's disapproval of sick people and madmen (because they are "wrong") expresses itself in spatial terms: "Franchot had said it: 'One should never *enter into* the delirium of a sick person' " (*M* 53, italics mine). He is then able to lead Eve out, into the living room.

Although Eve declares that she never goes into the living room, it is in fact her space. Within the apartment but not in "the room," she is in the situation of rejecting the normal world and unsuccessfully trying to enter into Pierre's madness. M. Darbédat points out Eve's *situation-limite:* within three years Pierre will have sunk into the condition of an animal; Eve's attempt to "live through imagination," to play her role like a tragedienne, is bound to fail. There are ways out: Pierre can be sent to Franchot's clinic. Eve can leave the apartment.

Frustrated in his attempts to liberate and in his daughter's rejection of the exits he proposes, M. Darbédat goes to the space where he feels most comfortable, outside in the sunny street. Through M. Darbédat's consciousness, this outer world indicates the false, comfortable "humanism" and assurance of one's place in society that Sartre will portray so acerbically in "L'Enfance d'un chef" and *La Nausée*. "In the sunny streets, among men, one could feel secure, as if in the midst of a big family" (*M* 59). The radio, which the *salaud* (as the reader must now perceive him) watches a woman and her daughter observing, functions as a technological sign of progress in communication among the family of man, the

very opposite of Pierre's closed room. The mother and daughter perhaps bring memories of the young and healthy Mme Darbédat and Eve.

By the end of this first part of the story, the reader has toured all of its spaces and must conclude, at least, that the outside is not to be valued over the inside. It is true that Mme Darbédat's room, metonymy of female incarnation, reeks of Sartre's peculiar form of gynophobia, and Eve's living room appears as an uneasy transition space, but Pierre's room, opposing as it does the sunlit openness of the *salaud,* exudes a peculiar fascination. Sharing Eve's viewpoint throughout the second half, we believe her when she reflects that only Pierre understands the reality of objects, that they do not show their true face to "normal" people. Pierre is perhaps only an exaggerated Roquentin, driven mad by attempting to fuse together the successive spatial experiences of the historian-existentialist, the closed room as sanctuary and retreat and the closed room as catalyst in the revelation of existence.

Pierre's room shares the characteristics of other cellular enclosures: it eternalizes time ("in the room there was neither day nor night nor season" [*M* 63]); it plunges its inhabitant into a visionary, inner world, it provides an utter freedom from social ties and conventions, and, with Eve there, it even appears as a deteriorated, parodic version of the romantic cell *à deux.* Eve's desire to penetrate into Pierre's world is spatialized by her fear and her decision to open the door and enter the room (*M* 63) but frustrated by the more powerful, metaphorical wall described by Pierre. "There is a wall between you and me. I see you, I speak to you, but you're on the other side." (*M* 68). Although Sartre, in his preface, specifically warns the reader to view Eve's attempt to enter Pierre's closed world as an act of bad faith,[25] this reading is in constant tension with the fascinating portrayal of Pierre's perception of the flying statues, for example, in contrast to the drab common sense of M. Darbédat. We cannot help but approve Eve's choice while at the same time being repelled by it; we do not want to see Pierre at Franchot's, but we know that he has imprisoned himself in a tangled web of evasive lies and partial, startling perceptions of truth. Whereas in the real, political prison of "Le Mur" we were able to distinguish clearly between *ils* and *nous,* in this domestic prison the distinctions are blurred. "They" (Darbédat, Franchot, and company) want to "free" the prisoner in order to

enclose him in a proper, institutional prison, but the prisoner is his own jailer as Eve becomes hers. The relationship between sequestration by others and self-sequestration (a theme of *La Séquestrée de Poitiers*) will be explored further in Sartre's drama, especially in *Huis clos* and *Les Séquestrés d'Altona.*

Sartre's drama of an infernal trio confined to a Napoleon III drawing room, written in 1944, recapitulates some of the spatial configurations in *Le Mur* but reflects vividly, if obliquely, aspects of the contemporary world of war, occupation, prisons, and camps. If this version of hell, one of the most strictly confined settings in the modern theater, is a product of Sartre's imagination, contemporary circumstances influenced its creation. Sartre's original idea for a theatrical *situation à huis clos* was a basement with a group of people confined during a bombing.[26] His own prison camp experience was an important source for the final version: "if I was concerned with dramatizing certain aspects of existentialism, I did not forget the feeling I had had in the stalag of living constantly, totally under the look of others and the hell that established itself naturally there."[27] Sartre's other remarks on his camp experience, we have seen, emphasize both the solitude and the solidarity, for the constant presence of others can give the prisoner the feeling of belonging to a great collectivity of us against them or, on the other hand, make him feel more intensely the barriers separating him from others. Sartre will bring out the possibility of fraternity through suffering (along with the exclusion of those who do not suffer) in *Morts sans sépulture;* in *Huis clos* it is the relation to others as "other" that interests him.

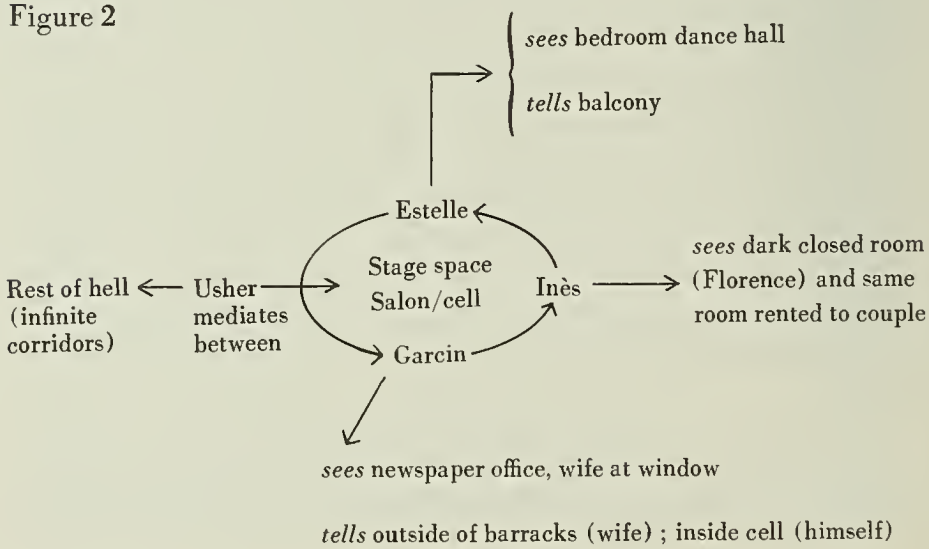
The familiar themes of prison and camp literature all appear in concentrated, refracted form in *Huis clos.* There is the gradual disappearance of past and future, the flattening out of time into an eternal present corresponding to the gradual recognition of the extreme limits of space. Along with this comes the sense of waiting within a world sealed off from the outside, without future and therefore without possibility of action. With no other diversion, the characters look into themselves and dis-cover themselves for each other.

The we/they or jailed/jailer relationship takes on a peculiar form in *Huis clos.* "They" (keepers of hell? demons?), constantly evoked by the internees, manifest themselves only through an underling, the usher who shows the three main characters their room.

Those ultimately responsible in fact never appear in Sartre's prisons; a more powerful "they" exists beyond the interrogators in "Le Mur," the torturers in *Morts sans sépulture*, the officers in *La Mort dans l'âme*. In this self-service prison, however, the spectator is led to understand that even if "they" exist, it is of no consequence, for the infernal triangle, on the model of domestic prisons, creates its own self-sufficient hell. Dramatic movement, in this setting where no real action is possible, is nevertheless set off by attempts in some way to open up the prison-space by outwitting "their" ruses. These attempts, based on an illusory they/we opposition, backfire to create a more and more confining prison. With the realization that *they* are in *us* (the famous "hell is other people"), the hope for an exit, the motivating dramatic force, vanishes, and the drama ripples off into "let us continue."

In the course of the attempts to open up the prison, imaginary spaces impose themselves on the theatrical space just as they do on the narrative spaces in "Le Mur" and "La Chambre."[28] The imaginary spaces include: the endless corridors and rooms of the rest of hell described by the usher (we are in a prison-world like that of "Le Mur"), places "seen" by the three characters in visions of life on earth they describe to each other, and, finally, places more conventionally described in the prisoners' individual narratives. The configuration may be seen in figure 2.

Figure 2



Rather than opening up the space on stage, the imaginary spaces gradually serve to close it up more tightly. The visions of the dead prisoners make them aware of their irremediable separation; they die away and we are left in a circular cell where the inmates pursue each other as if on a merry-go-round, in a cell with no exit. The sealed room in which time becomes only present, a progressive impossibility of action or exit and an eternity of waiting, prefigures, as has been suggested,[29] the anti-theater of Beckett and Ionesco.

We are introduced to the space on stage with the arrival of the first prisoner, Garcin. The room where an electric light is always on, where the prisoners' eyes cannot shut, and where sleep does not exist would seem to be a decor adapted to Garcin's professed desire to "face the situation" (*HC* 117); but this, of course, is precisely what he cannot do. His desire for evasion and its impossibility manifests itself through his reactions to the stage setting: he will break the light with the bronze statue (it is too heavy to pick up); he will ring the bell to call the usher (it does not work); he will go through the door (it will not open). The torture of pure presence, more effective than the conventional instruments he expects, begins to work.

With the introduction of Inès and Estelle, the three prisoners begin to try to understand the functioning of the infernal machine. Attention focuses on "them," what "they" are doing to "us" and why.

> Estelle: But why did they [*on*] put us three together?
> Garcin: Well, it's chance. They [*ils*] lodge people where they can. . .
> Inès: . . . They [*ils*] don't leave anything to chance.
> Estelle: . . . What are they [*ils*] waiting for?
> Inès: I don't know. But they [*ils*] are waiting. (HC 129–30)

There is in the beginning a show of unity among the prisoners in an effort to understand, perhaps to outwit *them* and *their* logic. As a means to this, the idea of each one confessing his or her sin to the others is introduced. This device is of course what opens theatrical space onto another temporal and spatial plane. Before they can be induced to recount their crimes, each one envisions a closed space of particular significance: for the narcissistic Estelle it is her bedroom full of mirrors, mirrors now "empty" without

her reflection (*HC* 136); for the would-be man of action but deserter Garcin it is the newspaper office full of men working—and then his wife sitting next to a window (*HC* 141–42); for the sadistic Inès it is the closed, dark, now empty room in which she ensnared Florence (*HC* 143). The confessions, recounted but not "seen," evoke other kinds of spaces. For Estelle and for Garcin, the balcony over the lake where she drowns her child and the train that he takes to Mexico represent false openings or escapes, attempts to flee from the knowledge and judgment of others by an act for which the actor assumes no responsibility. Inès's need was not to escape judgment but to be judged as evil by others; her attention remains focused on the room in which she drove Florence to her death. Accordingly, Inès is the only one who confesses almost without hesitation; Estelle and Garcin at first attempt escape by denial or false confessions.

Once the confessions are accomplished, each character has a last earthly vision of what might be called a torture space. For Estelle, it is the dance hall where the boy who once called her his "crystal" (*HC* 152) hears the news of her infanticide. Estelle's prize possession, her image (as in the mirrored room), is gone; the crystal is shattered. Garcin sees the newspaper office, its window significantly closed, in which his colleagues judge him a coward. Inès sees the room she shared with Florence let out to a heterosexual couple.

Having been tortured by their imaginary past spaces, the three close them off to live entirely in the sealed space and eternal present of hell. However, attempts to find a "way out" of there end with the creation of an infinitely self-perpetuating torture mechanism: Inès will try forever to ensnare Estelle into a lesbian relationship while Estelle tries to trap Garcin into becoming her lover while Garcin attempts to convince Inès to judge him a hero rather than a coward. (Typically, for Sartre, woman is trapped in her body-prison, man in his prison of consciousness.) By the end of the play, with space limited to the confines of the onstage prison, it is clear that these confines are defined not by *them* but by the eternally revolving triangular trap. This certitude is only reinforced by Sartre's famous *coup de théâtre*, the opening of the door. *Huis clos* distills Sartre's prison camp experience but without *them*, and thus without the extenuating element of prisoner solidarity. Just as "La Chambre" restates the spatial relations of

"Le Mur" in domestic terms, so *Huis clos* presents an *univers concentrationnaire* internalized.

Usually interpreted entirely in philosophical terms, *Huis Clos* deserves consideration in relation both to the prison metaphor tradition and to contemporary social-political concerns. It is not entirely accurate to say that it reflects the ontology of *L'Etre et le néant* while Sartre's last play, *Les Séquestrés d'Altona,* reflects the historical vision of *Critique de la raison dialectique.*[30] It is nonetheless true that *Les Séquestrés,* in keeping with Sartre's philosophical evolution, is more explicit in its treatment of the relationships between the lives of individuals and history. Still, it is by no means a political or circumstantial drama. (*Nekrassov,* Sartre's only comedy, is the only one of his plays that deals directly with a contemporary issue.) Whether Sartre had in mind the role of France in the Algerian war,[31] the Twentieth Communist Party Congress,[32] or the continuing impact of the Nazi era on Europe in 1959, the problems raised in the play are not limited to any of these.

In *Les Séquestrés,* as in *Huis clos,* we are in the presence of a small group of people caught in an internalized, everyday *univers concentrationnaire.* The difference is that the creation of the latter is shown to be the result of interactions among individual acts, family destiny, and historical events. If the unique theatrical space in *Huis clos* opens only onto imaginary visions, significant private spaces from past lives, the decors in *Les Séquestrés* are actually transformed momentarily into settings for flashbacks, relating past events to those aspects of national and family history that have created the present sequestration. The family members in *Les Séquestrés* are of course bound together by stronger and older bonds than those that the individuals in *Huis clos* create in their drawing-room hell. In the manner of "La Chambre," which is in a way resurrected in this play,[33] characters have their own spaces and the drama can be viewed as based on the way in which these spaces are penetrated.

The von Gerlach family mansion is as closed in on itself as the prison in "Le Mur" or the salon-hell of *Huis clos;* references to the contemporary outside world are sparse and abstract. The spaces represented in the stage settings are three: the living room (with the doorway to Frantz's room visible on a landing above) in the first and fifth acts, the inside of Frantz's room in the second and fourth acts, and Werner's office in the third act. In this tradi-

tional Germanic family where "women are silent" (*SA* 27), only the males have their own spaces: the father controls the living room and in fact the whole house; the sons have their places within his domain. Johanna, the daughter-in-law, the outsider, shares her husband Werner's rooms; we learn in the fourth act that the sister Leni has a room and that her father paid her the unusual honor of visiting her in it, but we never see it. The role of the women, like that of Eve in "La Chambre," is to commute between the "mad" solitary world of Frantz's room above and the rest of the house below.

The living room, in which Sartre sets a traditional exposition in the first scene, is from the outset filled with the presence of old von Gerlach, all the more so because he is awaited. The darkness, stuffiness, and crowded, ugly, nineteenth-century furniture all suggest the oppressive weight of tradition that hangs over the family, and the portraits of Frantz signal the crucial role of the "dead" eldest son. The sense of tradition is reinforced by Leni's assurance that a ritual is being reenacted: the family council that is about to take place has occurred in the same living room in the same way innumerable times before. The ritual, it turns out, is a rite empty of significance: the children swear on the family Bible, as they go to church, without any religious convictions. The oppression of family tradition is due not to its vitality but to its leftover forms, comparable to the old, uncomfortable furniture. As Leni remarks, "This family has lost its reasons for living, but it has kept its good habits" (*SA* 19).

The living room, the seat of the "family council" is the space from which von Gerlach controls *his* house, and the house, almost as if it were a living character, plays a crucial role in the play. The father makes two announcements to the family in the second scene: he will die (suicide before cancer, within six months), and he requires his son Werner and his daughter Leni to remain in the house. Once again, a dead form will take the place of a living substance, but it is imperative that the form be maintained. "A family is a house" (*SA* 29), he announces, and his affirmative answer to Johanna's question, "Does the house demand inhabitants?" (*SA* 28) seems to imply that the house, after his death, will continue to exercise the von Gerlach will. The von Gerlach family has several points in common with that long-time object of Sartre's research, the Flaubert family, including the Flaubert house that Sartre calls

"the congealed image of the Father" or the father's power as "a materialized, omnipresent will."[34] Keeping his son and daughter inside the house will assure the continuity of his power and control after his death.

However, the father must deal with another problem in his house. As Johanna, the outsider, reveals to the spectators, the von Gerlach mansion contains a kind of family skeleton. Frantz, the older son, now sequestered in his room for thirteen years. As long as Frantz remains sequestered he, too, retains a power over the rest of the family; Johanna perceives that she and his brother and sister are to be his "jailer-slaves." The father's motives, which will determine much of the circumscribed "action" of the play, are then to bring Frantz *out* into his domain and to keep the others *in*.

The dramatic question raised in this first scene is a retrospective one: why is Frantz sequestered? It is this that prompts the flashbacks Sartre calls *scènes-souvenirs* which in the living room are controlled entirely by the father.[35] It is significant that they take place only within the house, in the past. Thus old von Gerlach's space does not open at all but only reveals the past that is still determining the present.

These first two *scènes-souvenirs* reveal that at the basis of Frantz's sequestration lies the concentration camp that his father, selling land to Himmler, allowed to be built. In his walks along the barbed wires, the eighteen-year-old Frantz learned something of the relationship between power and powerlessness, jailer and jailed, and the relativity of "human dignity." Horrified by the prisoners, he tells his father that in their abjection, with their dirt, lice, and wounds, they no longer seem to be men. The dialogue continues:

> Father: They are what was made of them [*ce qu'on a fait d'eux*].
> Frantz: They [*on*] wouldn't do that to me.
> Father: No?
> Frantz: I'd hold up.
> Father: What proves that they're not holding up?
> Frantz: Their eyes.
> Father: If you were in their place, you'd look like them.
> Frantz: No. (*with fierce certitude*) No.
> Father: Look at me. (*He lifts his chin and stares into his eyes.*) Where does that come from?

Frantz: What?
Father: The fear of being confined. (*SA* 47)

It is at that moment that Frantz perceives the world as divided into jailers and prisoners, powerful and weak, those who control and those who are controlled. His father, not as a human being, but because of his business (which he made but which now controls him) aligns himself with the first camp. The realization will lead Frantz to an ongoing series of alternations between the two poles. To atone for his father's actions he hides the escaped Polish rabbi in his room (he is with the prisoners); to remedy his feeling of impotence when the rabbi is found and strangled in front of him and his father protects him from the consequences, he tortures the partisans on the Russian front (he is with the jailers, *them*). He reveals this desire to his father in the fifth act: "I will show my power by the singularity of an unforgettable act: change man into a vermin *while he is alive;* I'll take care of the prisoners by myself, I'll plunge them into abjection: they will talk" (*SA* 207). In reaction again, bounding back to the other side, he makes himself a prisoner in his room for thirteen years. Frantz is right to see himself as a victim of Luther. His actions result from a tortured, introspective conscience rather than from a dialectical relationship with the world.[36]

Frantz's space, his room, reveals his fluctuating adherence to prisoners/jailers, powerless/powerful or, as he puts it, all or nothing. Frantz's spatial position is a paradoxical one: he is inside, indeed completely inside the father's "materialized will," yet his room is his to close and the one place where his father cannot touch him. His very sequestration gives him a kind of freedom, a transcendence related to that of Sartre's other sequestered madman, Pierre. Frantz's space is the only one in the play to open to imaginary spaces beyond the house: to the past far away on the Russian front and to the future court of crabs from the thirtieth century. Frantz's "mad" vision of the men of the future as crabs, apart from Sartre's own obsession, has its reasons: they will judge us (crabs have eyes) but we will never be able to judge them (crabs' bodies are hidden by their shells). The only dimension Frantz refuses is the present; he has walled up the window in his room in order not to witness modern Germany (its destruction, he claims, its resur-

rection in reality). In this deformed monastic-romantic cell devoted to a ritual past and an imaginary future, clocks are abolished and duration replaced by eternity.

The least significant space in the play is Werner's office, remarkable by the fact that Werner seems to have no control over it. As if in an attempt to assert some independence from family tradition (a souvenir of Werner's life in Hamburg?) it contains modern furniture. Yet the father enters and assumes authority in it as he cannot do in Frantz's space; essentially it serves as a meeting place for old von Gerlach and Johanna who discuss the latter's interviews with Frantz (unknown to Werner). Werner, perhaps the most imprisoned of all because the most subservient to his father, is nevertheless well aware of his position: "They ruin my career as a lawyer to put me under house arrest in this awful building . . . one fine day the prodigal son consents to leave his room: they kill the fatted calf and kick me out" (*SA* 143). The inheritor by default of the family business now can hope only that all, including himself, continue to stay *in* where they are.

Dramatic conflicts in *Les Séquestrés* are produced through the interaction of the characters with these significant spaces. There are three *actants:* the father wants to keep Leni and Werner *in* the house and bring Frantz *out*, Leni wants to keep Frantz *in* his room, and Johanna, at the beginning, wants to get Werner (and herself) *out*. Werner allows himself to be acted upon; Frantz, while unwittingly controlling the other characters, is concerned only with himself.

A major peripeteia occurs in the fourth act when Johanna seems to be converted from the prime advocate of liberation to a devotee of sequestration. The conversion begins in the second act when Frantz recognizes in Johanna, the failed actress who wanted "everything," a fellow *séquestrée*. Gide's Mélanie is resurrected as a client of Werner's: "chained up, seventy-five pounds, covered with lice" (*SA* 117). Johanna resembles her, according to Frantz, because she must have "wanted everything" and, having lost, closed herself in her room to appear to refuse everything. By the end of the act, Johanna has consented to a *délire à deux:* Frantz will bear witness to her beauty, she will tell him lies about the destruction of Germany. In the fourth act she returns, ostensibly to tell Frantz that if he agrees to see his father, the father will let

Werner return to Hamburg. But Johanna suddenly reverses position: she will not tell the father Frantz's answer to his request; she sits down on Frantz's bed and announces that she will sequester herself in the room with him. Frantz, at that moment, takes the watch Johanna has brought in and throws it to the floor—eternity will reign. Yet Johanna's decision cannot last for she belongs to two worlds, Werner and Frantz, liberation and sequestration, the present and eternity. She will continue to "commute," but the situation is impossible, a true *situation-limite* rendered lexically in Sartrean spatial vocabulary:

> Frantz: We can neither live nor die.
> Johanna: Neither see each other nor leave each other.
> Frantz: We are completely cornered.
> Johanna: Completely.
> Frantz: There must be a way out [*issue*]. (*SA* 164)

In conformity with Sartre's theory of drama, the conflicts in the play are resolved when the "way out" is found. This involves the destruction of the lies protecting Frantz's sequestration: he must learn once and for all the truth about the prosperity of Germany and the von Gerlach's role in it; he must reveal that he tortured and accept the fact that since Germany's defeat brought her prosperity, all means to win the war were not justifiable, and he is no more than a common criminal. Frantz's one hope is that Johanna will be able to love and accept him even after she knows the truth. Leni, however, puts Johanna to the test and wins. Johanna, the actress, can then literally make her exit by walking out of Frantz's room and all that it connotes for her forever. Although Frantz momentarily attempts to resequester himself by an imaginary metamorphosis into a crab, his own way out—double suicide with his father—is now clear and he, too, emerges from the room. Thus the lexical *issue* unfolds for both Johanna and Frantz as a dramatic exit.

In spite of the tricks of suspense it has been fairly clear from the beginning that the old man would win out in the end, for there is an atmosphere of fatality, accentuated by predictions that come true, that permeates the play. The theme "loser wins," reiterated several times, the title of one English translation, is borne out by the fact that the disillusioned cancer victim commits suicide but

succeeds in making his will prevail. In fact it is his "materialized will" manifested in the power of the house-prison that prevails. Leni submits to it as she points to Frantz's room and declares, "There has to be someone sequestered up there. It will be me" (*SA* 221). Johanna's and Werner's end is not made explicit, but one is left with the supposition that they will remain to fill the roles of the ground floor *séquestrés.*

Although the dramatic conflict in *Les Séquestrés d'Altona* is resolved through *situation-limite/issue,* it is clear that we have come a long way from the theories of the philosopher of liberty who could write that everyone, in choosing his exit, chooses himself. What are Frantz's choices? to put his tortured and torturing past behind him and walk out to assume his position as head of the von Gerlach ship-building enterprises? to go off to Hamburg? to say, as Leni does, "I wanted to do what I did"? Is his self-annihilation into his father's will an assertion of freedom? It seems rather that Frantz's thirteen-year sequestration has been, paradoxically, his most authentic mode of being. As spectators, we are obliged to choose Frantz over Werner as we chose Pierre over M. Darbédat—once again Sartre's real attraction, with repulsion, to the madman's cell is evident. Like Pierre, Frantz sees the "nature" of things beneath commonplace reality. When Johanna tells Werner, "Madmen tell the truth . . . there's only one . . . the horror of living" (*SA* 146), the voice is Sartre's. Frantz's cellular space reveals a historical as well as a metaphysical truth: the position of the former torturer hidden within the fortress of one of the most successful businesses in postwar Germany is a sign of the reality underlying its prosperity (or the prosperity of France after the Algerian war). It is a place in a timeless present that reveals, as if through windows onto the past and future, a concentration camp at its origin and a court of judges of the thirtieth century in its future.

Frantz's madness, and his sequestration might even be viewed as a Laingian type of sanity, an insane reaction to an insane world.[37] His form of poetry, his tapes, parallel in kind though not in quality to the writings of Sartre's great *séquestrés* Genet and Flaubert, are attempts to create a way out from inside the prison. Frantz, however, has the misfortune not to possess genius; he is also finally responsible for what seems to be for Sartre the one

unforgivable act. Trapped in the dialectics of history as well as by his own acts and bad conscience, he remains both sacrificial victim and madly lucid witness to the horrors of his time and ours.

Sartre's last play states most explicitly the paradoxical valorization of imprisonment that appears throughout his work. Lexically in his philosophical writing and essays and topographically in his fiction and drama the individual cellular type of metaphor or setting, the closed-world collective camp type, and the small collective cell type all manifest ambivalences in both structure and significance. In its female variant, the solitary cell is shell, extension of the body, domain of incarnation, *en-soi*, inauthenticity. In one of its male variants it is the prison of consciousness, sequestration in past or eternity, refusal of action, the negative of liberty. Yet a (male) cellular space (such as Roquentin's room) may refuse to act as refuge and become instead the space of revelation, the instigator of freedom. In this instance it may function as dramatic *situation-limite*, determining the plot of play or narrative by forcing the characters to choose a "way out." On the other hand, the cellular space itself may, in the tradition of the monastic-romantic cell, exercise a fascination and an appeal to transcendence that engage the reader/spectator in an identification with "inner" worlds of subjectivity, madness, or individual genius as approaches to truths not seen in the world of action and projects. Brunet's immersion in a cellular dream as well as Pierre's and Frantz's almost Pascalian insights into "the horror" underlying the human condition state an attraction/repulsion to the poetry of the cell. Formally, these tendencies manifest themselves as structures that progress spatially more than temporally, and in which topography may play as important a role as character. The green room and the pink room have narrative functions as important as those of Mathieu and Marcelle; the house in *Les Séquestrés* is in a sense the play's protagonist.

Another type of ambivalence appears in the collective prisons where the presence of others may lead to an apprenticeship in solidarity or a discovery of the "other." Thus occupied Paris and the stalag offer experiences in encagement/engagement and the discovery of the road to freedom, while the incarceration with others in the prison of "Le Mur" or the drawing-room hell of *Huis clos* presents a vision of a miniature, abstracted *univers con-*

centrationnaire of torture and humiliation without even the moments of dignity and solidarity expressed in the *témoignages* of former camp inmates. For Sartre, as for Malraux and Camus, it would seem that the prisons of the imagination generally exercise a sense of both horror and fascination far more intense than the prisons that resemble or originate in life experience. For Jean Genet, the point of departure is radically different, as the horror of experience becomes transformed in imagination.

5 From Inside

In Sartre's monumental introduction to the works of Jean Genet, the prison appears not only as a major fact of his subject's biography but also as a metaphor describing the timeless *situation* (Mircea Eliade's *in illo tempore*) in which he exists. Genet's primordial childhood experience was for Sartre his consciousness of being labeled a thief by others. His inward acceptance of that label leads him to live a stagnant life (despite its adventures) in which all events merely repeat and confirm his being: "He has enclosed himself, without recourse, into that circular prison. Sometimes he calls it a tomb."[1] His actual incarcerations, first in the children's reformatory at Mettray and then in various state penitentiaries throughout Europe, seem to offer a ready-made society in contrast to the moral solitude of the thief-beggar-prostitute. Yet when the prisoner finds himself excluded from underworld prison society as well as from the bourgeois world he becomes doubly conscious of his permanent state of exile. Alone in his cell, humiliated both by his jailers and by the other prisoners, Genet has no recourse other than to sink deeper and deeper into abjection. At the point of no return the prisoner's imagination magically transforms his surroundings: the prison becomes a palace, a sumptuous refuge protecting an archaic, exiled king. The penitentiary is transformed into a monastery, the cell into a monastic cell, a space for spiritual exercise, purification, union with the divine. As contact with the outside world disappears, so does profane time: the prisoner finds himself living in "eternity."[2]

Like one of his dramatic characters, Sartre's Genet will at last invent a "way out" of his locked-in situation, both literal and figurative, but Genet's way out leads through the inside, by willing his abjection, playing more rashly than Frantz von Gerlach the

game of "loser wins." It is his literary talent that will serve to open "the exit one invents in desperate cases."[3] Immersing himself fully in the evil he finds concentrated in prison, magnifying it with his imagination, and transmitting it to literature, the writer becomes acceptable to the bourgeois world that had rejected the petty thief. Genet the man literally writes his way out of prison while his poetic texts transcend his "eternal" closed situation.

Thanks to the support of the French literary world, Genet did indeed finally write his way out of prison. Yet his writings do not follow the existentialist schema as neatly as Sartre would have us believe. Rather than creating for himself a way out through the back door, as it were, turning the prison into literature, Genet tends to bring his reader into the circular world he continues to inhabit and to glorify. The texts he generates from his cell—at once a place where he is confined by others, a physical extension of his moral isolation, and a monastic cell opening onto intense spirituality—proceed spatially, generating other closed spaces that are at last reabsorbed into the generating cell. The cell thus instigates the clash between the profane and the spiritual that produces poetry, but this poetry does not evolve into a fictional world (à la Balzac) that can exist independently outside of four walls, that can be consumed by "free" readers on their own terms. Instead, the narrator, the characters, or other devices constantly call attention to the limits of the setting, the cellular conditions of production, and the necessity for the reader to incorporate himself in the space of the text rather than the other way around. This pattern applies particularly to the novel *Notre Dame des Fleurs* (*Our Lady of the Flowers*) and the play *Haute Surveillance* (*Deathwatch*), both set (primarily) in prison cells, and to *Les Bonnes* (*The Maids*) and *Le Balcon* (*The Balcony*) whose imprisoning settings are transpositions of the fantasized prison. In the prose works *Miracle de la rose* (*Miracle of the Rose*) and *Journal d'un voleur* (*A Thief's Journal*), Genet goes beyond the confines of the generating cell to explore the prison as a total world, or to attempt a myth of prison. In *Pompes Funèbres* (*Funeral Rites*), *Querelle de Brest* (*Quarrel of Brest*), and *Les Paravents* (*The Screens*), all written after Genet had been released, prisons and related confinements no longer constitute major settings but remain as central spaces in the texts, bearing traces of former prisons and serving as a *mise en abîme* for the work as a whole. Among Genet's later works, only *Les*

Nègres (*The Blacks*) does away with this centrality of a prison. Still, it is clear that the blacks play the role of prisoners of white or colonial society as it is clear that Genet's later political interests constitute a solidarity with the outcasts and prisoners of bourgeois society. He finds in the prison letters of George Jackson, for example, the same process of writing "from the other side" with a view toward entrapping the reader that constituted his own literary method. Using the language of white America, the black man in prison "has then only one recourse: to accept this language [white American English] but to corrupt it so skillfully that the white men are caught up in his trap."[4]

Of Genet's lexical "prisons" there is little to say. It is Sartre, not Genet himself, who metaphorizes his situation into a "circular prison." Apart from some curious literary borrowings in the early poetry, prisons rarely appear as metaphors in Genet's work: for this insider, the equation of the human or the historical condition (or indeed the situation of Jean Genet) with a lexical "prison" would be nonsense. Whereas writers for whom imprisonment was a historical accident—Malraux, Camus, Sartre, wartime political prisoners, even some deportees—tended, we have seen, to universalize the prison experience through metaphor, Genet convinces his readers that there are no tangential points, no grounds for metaphor, between what he calls "your world" and the prison world. Although imprisonment does constitute Genet's existential situation, rather than inducing the choice of an "exit" or a "road" it occasions the creation of a world that, although mirroring ours in a distorted way, is incomparable, *other*. Genet's prison is in this sense close to the rooms of Sartre's "madmen," Pierre and Frantz.

Grounds for comparison in Genet's metaphors exist between the prison and the sacred, rather than the secular; a cell may become a spiritualized monastic cell. It is here we find a strong link between Genet and the Western tradition of "prison" literature as well as with the wartime prison writers. Many of the traditional themes reappear: the cessation of time with the sense of spiritual liberation, ritual death and rebirth, the "delightful prison," the prison of love, the prison as community, and the prison as humiliation, horror, hell. What we do not find are what might be called the "resistance" themes: the importance of solidarity, the freedom discovered in revolt, the nourishment in memories of one's former life. Jean Genet pursues a journey as different from that of the

political inmates in his own prison at Fresnes as from the "prisoners of the Plague."

Many of Genet's prison themes appear in rudimentary form in his first published works, particularly the two poems "Le Condamné à mort" ("The Man Condemned to Death") and "Marche funèbre" ("Funeral March"). Written in and of the prison, ostensibly for other prisoners, they celebrate the execution of the young assassin Maurice Pilorge, model for "Our Lady of the Flowers." Speaking for Pilorge in the first person, Genet evokes in "Le Condamné à mort" a cell peopled with visions and dreams and the "song" that his death will produce, both themes of some importance to his later work. When Pilorge envisions escape from death row, he fantasizes not a life in "freedom" but a plunge into the extremity of the French penal system, the convict-prisons in Guiana.

> O la douceur du bagne impossible et lointain!
> O le ciel de la belle, ô la mer et les palmes,
> Les matins transparents, les soirs fous, les nuits calmes,
> O les cheveux tondus et les Peaux-de-Satin. (*Po* 14).
>
> O sweetness of the impossible, faraway prison!
> O sky of beauty, sea and palm trees,
> Transparent mornings, mad evenings, calm nights,
> O shaved heads and satin skins.

Evoked here in unmistakably Baudelairian terms, Guiana will appear throughout Genet's work as a kind of pederastic earthly paradise in an inverted theological system, the opening or "liberation" promised by the discipline of cellular life.

More significant as a preview of Genet's use of the cell as generator of poetry and of other major prison themes is "Marche funèbre," an account of the effects of the young Pilorge—alive, sentenced, and dead—on the poet in prison. The prison's architecture fuses with a descent into the self: "Perfidious is the sleep into which prison leads me /and more obscurely in my secret corridors" (*Po* 33). Like Thomas à Kempis, Genet finds life in a "beloved cell" conducive to meditation: "My beloved cell . . . your dark corridors are the windings of my heart" (*Po* 43).

It is not only the medieval-monastic tradition that Genet echoes in this most literary poem. An "enchanted" reader of Ronsard at the age of fifteen,[5] he appears to have borrowed the Renais-

sance convention of the lover as prisoner of the beloved, decorating it with *argot:*

C'est en moi qu'il me boucle et c'est jusqu'à perpète
Ce gâfe de vingt ans!
Un seul geste son oeil, ses cheveux dans les dents:
Mon coeur s'ouvre et le gâfe avec un cri de fête
M'emprisonne dedans. (*Po* 31)

It's in myself that he locks me and it's for life
This twenty-year old turnkey!
One glance from his eye, his hair in his teeth:
My heart opens and the turnkey with a shout of joy
Imprisons me within.

With an uncharacteristic allegorical twist, the poet appears as both prison and prisoner, and the beloved as the jailer who alone has the power to release him from himself. The liberation, however, cannot take place, as Pilorge is "marching" toward death. Instead, the prisoner must turn his love inward, toward the timeless and eternal world where, in the romantic tradition, he at first seeks death and then awaits rebirth.

Où sans vieillir je meurs je t'aime ô ma prison.
. . . . . .
J'ai trop de place encore ce n'est pas mon tombeau
Trop grande est ma cellule est trop pure ma fenêtre
Dans la nuit prénatale attendant de renaître
Je me laisse vivant par un signe plus haut
De la Mort reconnaître. (*Po* 48)

O my prison, where I die without growing old, I love you.
. . . . . .
I still have too much room, this is not my tomb
Too big my cell too pure my window
Waiting to be reborn in the prenatal night
I let myself living by a higher sign
Be recognized by death.

Rebirth here will be the occasion for the production of "song" or, as Genet describes his literary enterprise: "this frightening adventure of daring to discover the gold hidden under so much rot" (*Po* 49).

It is this "adventure" that, emerging from literary convention

to a truly original enterprise, will produce *Notre Dame des Fleurs.* Written in the prison at Fresnes on brown sheets of paper intended for bags, Genet's first novel is an almost entirely spatial text whose chronology is flattened out and compressed into patterns rather than arranged in sequences. "Jean Genet's" prison cell, from which the narrative emanates and to which it returns, reproduces itself in other literal and metaphorical "cells" that serve as links between the levels of narrative time.

These narrative levels, which have been analyzed in a slightly different way by Camille Naish,[6] are in my view three. The first appears as something of a conventional "frame" in which Jean Genet (whom it is probably best to see as a "represented narrator," in Wayne Booth's terms) awaits his trial and composes his novel in his solitary cell. The second is the story he tells, essentially that of the shifting triangular love relationships of the Montmartre queen Divine with the brief career of the adolescent murderer Notre Dame des Fleurs as subplot. The third level, a backdrop to the second, recounts incidents from the childhood of Divine, when "she" was a boy named Louis Culafroy. One could consider as part of the frame or as yet another level incidents from the life of Jean Genet that occasionally crop up. Each of these levels centers around significant spaces that have been generated by and that in a way duplicate the cell of the narrator-creator.

This cell is on the one hand a "real" place of sordid isolation where the prisoner-narrator wonders if he will be freed or condemned. The "real" prison, Fresnes, is also the place where the narrator briefly meets the main character of his narration, Divine, and where, at the end, Divine's lover Mignon-les-petits-pieds is imprisoned so that, Genet says, "the longest detours" lead him back to it. On the other hand the cell is a space that detaches itself from reality, permitting the narrator, immersed in his solitary sexual pleasure, to spawn the creatures of his imagination.

Genet's cellular meditations prepare him for creation as a monk's cellular rituals prepare him for spiritual elevation. Completely subjected to the will of the "others" who have created the prison system, the prisoner has nowhere to turn but inward. As if again following Thomas à Kempis's recommendations Genet calls his cell a "good gentle friend," a "sweet retreat," a "consolation." The cell at Fresnes is also all of the other cells that Genet has inhabited or might inhabit. Were he to move freely to another town,

"I would go to find you there," says the narrator to his cell (*ND* 69), and he praises the "sweet prison cells" in contrast to "the disgusting [*immonde*] monstrosity of my arrest, of my various arrests of which each one is always the first" (*ND* 49). The cell thus becomes an eternal setting for a ritual, repeated drama.

The cellular rites involve a process of turning fatality inward, conforming a regime imposed by others to the prisoner's own will. Cast out from the world of the "living" to that of the "dead," Genet must now ritually will his own death.

> The world of the living is never too far from me. I keep it away as much as I can by all the means at my disposal. The world moves away until it is nothing but a gold dot in a sky so cloudy that the abyss between our world and the other is such that there is no longer anything real but our tomb. There, I begin the existence of a real dead man. More and more, I cut, I prune that existence of all facts. (*ND* 114)

Pruning existence means not only abandoning petty concerns but especially abandoning hope of returning to the living world and thus forsaking profane time for eternity. Like other real and literary prisoners, Genet undergoes a symbolic death and rebirth, but in his case rebirth means creation. The dead man gives birth to *Notre Dame des Fleurs.*

The novel remains intimately bound to its creator's cell not only because it constantly returns to that narrative level but also because, through a process of spatial overlapping, cells and cellular enclosures on the other narrative levels seem to spring from it. It is as if the prison cell were a biological cell or a fertilized egg capable of multiplying itself and then contracting its multiple selves back into one. The most important cellular offspring is Divine's attic room in Montmartre. On its walls are displayed the same portraits of murderers that garnish Genet's cell walls. Like his cell too, Divine's garret is a "temporary tomb." Both cell and room have balconies looking onto spaces signifying death: Genet looks out onto the prison courtyard and Divine onto a cemetery. While Genet's cell is periodically a space of sweet, solitary happiness, Divine's for ten years contains the happiness of which Genet dreams, the "ideal" love affair between Divine and the pimp Mignon-les-petits-pieds. The garret becomes an inverted romantic cell *à deux* and then *à trois.*

Garret and cell both exhibit the peculiar property of being detachable from the structure of which they are a part. On her mantelpiece, Divine keeps a small tube of phenobarbital, enough to unhinge the room from the building, suspending it like a cage between heaven and earth (*ND* 30); it can become a garret flying over the tombs (*ND* 108). Similarly, with the magic touch of Mignon (who, imprisoned, steps from the second narrative level into the first), Genet's cell begins to fly.

> My cell is in the exact form of a cube. In the evening, as soon as Mignon lies down on his bed, the window carries it off toward the west, detaches it from the masonry and flies away with it, dragging it along like a balloon basket. (*ND* 162)

"Flying" enables Genet and Divine to transpose the prosaic world into poetry, to inhabit a realm unknown to what Genet, addressing the reader, calls "your world." Punning on the two meanings of *voler* (to fly and to steal), Genet imagines the entire prison flying, engendering thieves (*voleurs*). "The thief makes heads turn, houses pitch, castles dance, prisons fly" (*ND* 164). Genet's universe seems to operate according to a physical law by which those places most shut off from the "living" world have the power to sail off into infinity; those most weighted down by stone and iron defy gravity. The motif reappears during the trial of Adrien Baillou alias Our Lady of the Flowers.

> Snow was falling. Everything around the room was silent. The Assize courtroom was abandoned in space, all alone. It no longer obeyed the laws of earth. Through the stars and the planets it was swiftly flying away. It was, in the air, the stone house of the Holy Virgin. (*ND* 190)

In one of Genet's rare prison similes, Our Lady in person is transformed into a flying prison.

> . . . (but perhaps he stood before you like the prison which, at the passing of that woman singing in the night, remained for her an evil wall, whereas all the cells were secretly taking flight, set off by hands clapping like the wings of the inmates, overwhelmed by that song). (*ND* 178)

Thus the courtroom where Notre Dame is tried is, like Divine's garret, a sacred prison space generated from the cell in

Fresnes. Other cellular spaces on the second narrative level articulate with these through the theme of death and fatality: the apartment where Notre Dame "accomplishes his destiny" by killing the old man, the prostitute's hotel room where he goes to escape horror by "giving into it completely," and the room where he is caught, which suggests the room where he killed.

The third narrative level, events in the life of Louis Culafroy, also contains several prison spaces permeated with a sense of fatality. Standing as it does as a background to the narrative being written, this level is already closed off, without future, dead. The narrator in fact steps in to inform the reader that the fates of the main characters on this level already have been predetermined by the text he is writing (*ND* 20). Culafroy's childhood habitations prefigure Divine's garret/prison/death chamber. There is the slate-roofed house in the village where he lives isolated from the world (*ND* 79), an imaginary noble. There is the cell where he is put when he runs away from home, a place he realizes he had "previewed" in his room at home. This cell serves as prelude to the reformatory or "children's prison" at Mettray, itself a kind of antechamber to the men's prison. In the night silence of the dormitory, children are reborn from the dead (*ND* 133). Like the prison, the children's camp is a "kingdom distinct from the kingdom of the living" (*ND* 134) where values are inverted and where beauty emerges from filth.

Mettray also connects to the first narrative level through Jean Genet's own childhood experiences there. Other interpenetrations between levels occur: the black man Seck Gorgui, one of Divine's lovers in the garret, fades back to his model Clément Village, Genet's cellmate in "another French prison." The description of Culafroy-Divine's mother Ernestine, who experiences a "theatrical" union with God as she watches over Divine's last moments, leads Genet to recount what he learned of "revelation" in a Yugoslav prison (an anecdote that reappears in *Journal d'un voleur*). Ostracized by the other prisoners because of his inability and fear of participating in their games, huddled underneath the window while they mock him, Genet experiences his revelation, an understanding of the "essence" of the room. "It remained a room, but prison of the world. I was, by my monstrous horror, exiled to the confines of the loathsome [*immonde*] (which is the nonworld [*non-monde*])" (*ND* 202).

The concept of *l'immonde* is in fact central to Genet's prison myth. Playing on the word's accepted meaning of "filthy," "loathsome," or "obscene" and its structure that suggests nonworld or antiworld, Genet implies that the prison is a world apart from ours (the "underworld") where our physical and moral laws do not apply, but with its own laws. Exile from the "normal" world puts one in the antiworld, but exile from *l'immonde* is a state of total moral solitude, nowhere. In this anecdote, the room becomes a metonymy for the prison (the prison where Genet resides and also Prison, *L'Immonde*) and the corner a metonymy for Genet's cell, the state of utter isolation and nonbeing that he must rigorously will in order to emerge victorious through rebirth and re-creation.

The spaces and the creatures spawned by Genet's generating cell must, in the end, be taken back into it, passed like himself into the nonworld. Divine dead, her garret room vanishes, reabsorbed into its progenitor. Notre Dame, sacrificial victim, becomes himself a flying prison, and Mignon steps from the second narrative level to the first to inhabit the prison with Genet. At the end, the space of the novel is reduced to the cell where Jean Genet wonders what will happen at his trial. Will he be freed, "that is, exiled among the living" (*ND* 205) or sentenced? In the latter case:

> I will put on my sackcloth again and this rust-colored garment will at once oblige me to make the monastic gesture. . . . I will create again, for the enchantment of my cell, adorable new lives for Mignon, Divine, Our Lady, and Gabriel. (*ND* 206)

Thus returning to his solitude, Genet completes one cycle but anticipates a series that could perpetuate itself in continuous deaths and rebirths. In the cell is the beginning and the end, asceticism and profusion, humiliation and glory, time and eternity, exile and creation.

The cell that serves as setting for Genet's one-act play, *Haute Surveillance*, resists opening to the outside even more rigorously than the generating cell of *Notre Dame*. Originally written only a few years after his first novel but revised in 1965,[7] *Haute Surveillance* has a plot of Racinian purity except for the act of violence committed onstage. The three inmates, the young, delinquent Maurice; the burglar about to be freed, LeFranc; and the murderer

awaiting trial, Green-Eyes, discuss each other, the latter's wife (or girlfriend), and a condemned murderer, the black Snowball who lives in another part of the prison. The illiterate Green-Eyes discovers that his woman is turning away from him because she has understood that LeFranc was actually writing his letters; he makes plans for LeFranc or Maurice to kill her. The prison guard announces the arrival of Green-Eyes' wife; he refuses to see her but bequeaths her to the same guard;[8] Maurice and LeFranc quarrel; LeFranc strangles Maurice.

The situation, as many critics have noted, closely resembles that of *Huis clos*. There is the same infernal triangle plus guard, creating its self-service hell through internal relations, the same flattening out of time into an eternal present, and a movement toward *reserrement* whereby the opening onto imaginary spaces merely serves gradually to cut off everything beyond the limited stage space. In both plays, the only event that might be called a peripeteia occurs when a door is opened, and the characters (Garcin, Green-Eyes) choose not to go out. These similarities, however, put into relief the quite different values that Sartre and Genet assign to the cellular topography. The characters in both plays pass from the active world in which free actions and decisions were possible into the static world of eternity and essences, but while for Sartre this is the hell of bad faith or the internalized *univers concentrationnaire*, for Genet it is a sacred ritual of initiation into *l'immonde*, a ritual that Green-Eyes struggles to accomplish, at which Maurice is an initiate and finally a sacrificial victim, and that LeFranc imitates and attempts in vain.

The stage-set cell has almost none of the realistic aura of prison as found in *Miracle de la rose* or even in *Notre Dame des Fleurs*. A "fortress" rather than a prison cell, its stone walls, according to the stage directions, are to make the spectator imagine that the prison has a "complicated architecture" (à la Piranesi or like the endless corridors that constitute the offstage space in *Huis clos*).[9] The violent colors of the sets and costumes and the unnatural heaviness of the gestures are to carry the spectator from reality to dream, from appearance to essence. The dialogue exaggerates the hardships and asceticism of prison life: LeFranc claims the prisoners are starved and losing their strength (*HS* 189); Green-Eyes, whose feet are in chains, remarks that his strength is being destroyed by the cell and the lack of sunshine and air (*HS*

193–96). The spectators or readers are thus reminded that they are witnessing not an anecdote about prisoners (any more than *The Maids* is a story of domestics) but an essence of imprisonment.

As in *Huis clos,* the movement toward closure in this already closed world consists of each character revealing to himself and to the others *what he is.* This unfolding is centered on Green-Eyes. Since he is expecting to be sentenced to death, he is already a "dead man" and alone, *solo* (*HS* 193). He feels that he is falling (*HS* 196); his efforts will be directed now toward cutting the ties with "your world" in order to pass through the domain of *l'im-monde* to the mythical Guiana, "the world of straw hats and palm trees" (*HS* 197). Re-evoking the scene of the murder, a room where the corpse would not pass through the door, Green-Eyes realizes that his links with the human world were severed at the moment of his crime, that he can no longer return to breathe "easy air" (*HS* 197). Like the prisoners in *Huis clos,* Green-Eyes in his narrative creates an offstage ("diegetic") space analagous to his cell, a closed space permeated with fatality. As in Sartre's play too, the imaginary space serves not to open but to close out all spatial and temporal dimensions except the present and the cell. Having confessed, having dis-covered himself to his cellmates, Green-Eyes reenacts his death to the world and proceeds to undergo a rebirth, or rather, a reconstruction.

> I reconstruct myself. I paste myself together. I make myself anew. I am getting stronger, heavier than a fortress. . . . I am the fortress! In my cells, I keep strong men, hoodlums. . . . I am the fortress and I'm alone in the world. (*HS* 200)

Like the assassin Our Lady of the Flowers at the moment of his apotheosis, Green-Eyes *becomes* the prison. It is at this moment that the door opens, the guardian informs him that his wife is waiting to see him, and Green-Eyes makes the decision not to go out. The guardian also gives him, to the surprise of the others, two cigarettes sent by Snowball. This gift from the supercriminal indicates to them that Green-Eyes is in contact with the highest powers in the prison world, the cigarettes come from "beyond the water" (*HS* 204); Snowball and Green-Eyes will escape to Cayenne together (*HS* 206). Thus Green-Eyes' strict adherence to the prison-world assures his place in an ecclesiastical type of hierarchy, leading him, as if through ascetic exercises and grace, to a reversed

freedom on the other side of enclosure. The relationships among the prisoners stablize: Green-Eyes is lord of the cell, just as Snowball is lord of the prison. Maurice is his devotee, a child of the same stuff, and LeFranc the outsider, the causc of disorder in the cell who can never work his way into the order.

LeFranc (*l'affranchi*, the liberated?) is a special case to begin with in that he has served his sentence and is almost due to be freed. During the course of the play it bccomes apparent that he is attempting to negate his status as almost-outsider, that he is doing everything in his power to remain in and of the sealed, eternal world of the cell.

> I did what I could to isolate you from the world and separate from the world the cell and even the fortress. . . . I wanted the whole world to know that we're here, that we're fine. *Entre nous.* I wanted not a drop of air to get in from the outside. (*HS* 205)

This is the reason, LeFranc explains to his cellmates, that he attempted through the letters he wrote for thc illiterate Green-Eyes to separate him from his wife. A knowledge of letters, as it turns out, is all that LeFranc possesses and *words* are separated irretrievably from *things*. Word-knowledge is outsider's knowledge, recognition of signs as opposed to possession of essence.

Those who wear the sign of misfortune wear it naturally, as if radiating from inside, without having appropriated it. LeFranc, on the other hand, has attempted to give himself a sign by writing *le vengeur* (the avenger) on his body, a title, as Maurice notes, that he read in a book. When LeFranc attempts to annihilate his inauthentic mode of being by an authentic act, the strangulation of Maurice, Green-Eyes informs him that one cannot choose misfortune, one is chosen. LeFranc's defense, "I did what I could, for the love of misfortune" (*HS* 213)—in the earlier edition, "Mon malheur vient de plus loin . . . Il vient de moi-même" (my misfortune comes from farther away. . . . It comes from myself; an ironic echo of *Phèdre?*)—is contemptuously dismissed by Green-Eyes. In the eternal world of essences that is prison, one cannot will, act, or create oneself, one can only be what one is. One cannot commit an act of evil in the place that already is evil. The fake judge in *Le Balcon* will explain: "Prisons, cells, blessed places where evil is impossible, because they are the crossroads of all the

malediction in the world. One cannot commit evil inside evil" (*Ba* 54). The ambivalent play between sham acts and real acts will be developed further by Genet in his subsequent theater; here it serves to confirm the special nature of the prison and LeFranc's isolation within it.

The line with which the play ends, LeFranc's "I really am all alone," ironically recalls his desire to isolate the prison cell, to be alone in the sense that Green-Eyes is alone. The difference between the two solitudes is indicated lexically: LeFranc is *seul*, Green-Eyes *solo*. Green-Eyes' term is not Italian but argot; Bulkaen, too, in *Miracle de la rose*, commits his crimes *solo*. *Solo* also suggests music, as references to music become frequent in the last part of the play. Green-Eyes' performance, as opposed to LeFranc's manipulation of signs, is a gift of nature resonating throughout the cell as the presence of Snowball radiates throughout the prison. Thus, *solo* connotes a state of exclusion from "your world" but a state of grace in *l'immonde*, whereas *seul* designates exclusion from the elect of prison itself, recalling Genet's situation in the Yugoslav prison, the nonworld.[10]

By the end of the play nothing actually has happened but a ritual has been enacted so that things have become what they are. The cell closes into itself within its fortress; plans for return to and connection with the outside are severed. As Green-Eyes warned earlier in the play, "Don't you see that here we're making up stories that can only live between four walls?" (*HS* 193). There can be no action in a cell, only cycles of death, re-creation or reconstruction, revelation. The prison elect, even the dead Maurice, are what they are within the cell. Whereas the manipulator of words, the narrator in *Notre Dame*, ended in the privileged position of reabsorbing his fictive world into his cell, LeFranc, the man of signs (not things) and words (not music), is excluded from the cell he sought to penetrate by the man he tried to control through written words. Like Genet, LeFranc is excluded to the *immonde* of utter solitude, but in the collective cell he is not allowed the consolation of a verbal victory.

In a 1949 interview, Genet stated that in moving from *Haute Surveillance* to *Les Bonnes* he had merely "changed cells."[11] Traces of the prison remain in the elegant bedroom; like *Deathwatch*, *The Maids* ends with a ritualistic, useless, in-house murder and, as Sartre has shown, the network of hierarchical relationships in both

plays is similar. Yet the correspondence is not exact. Monsieur, although he resembles Snowball in that he is the absent kingpin, is no great criminal; indeed he is a fake criminal, falsely accused, who succeeds in returning to the "free" world. Only the maids remain riveted to the prison that they themselves create. We are here on a kind of threshold between the prison and "your world," a transitional space like Eve's salon in "La Chambre." Madame, with the maids but not of them, boasting that she is ready to join Monsieur in prison but ultimately free to meet him at the café, serves as a link between worlds. "Un peu cocotte et un peu bourgeoise,"[12] she has the decor that suits her intermediary status, that of a *demi-mondaine*. We witness here not so much a change of cells as a metamorphosis of the cell.

While Madame herself slips in and out, the bedroom, like the cell in *Haute Surveillance* and indeed the drawing room in *Huis clos*, becomes an infernal, claustrophobic decor for a one-act drama of triangular relationships. Although there are no formal divisions, the strictly symmetrical scenes of *Les Bonnes* resemble the acts of a five-act tragedy. The first scene consists of Claire impersonating Madame and Solange impersonating Claire in their ritual of hatred and approach to murder. The ring of the alarm clock signals the shift to the second scene, where the maids assume their own roles, exposing their denunciation of Monsieur to the police and their plot to poison Madame. In the third, central scene in which Madame makes her only appearance, the action is reversed: the maids almost succeed in giving Madame a cup of poisoned tea but inadvertently reveal to her that Monsieur, temporarily freed, is awaiting her at a café. Madame, instead of remaining in the trap laid for her, exits to meet him in "freedom." The fourth scene corresponds to the second as the maids, alone and in their own roles, attempt to plan what to do next. The play ends as it began with the ritual between Claire-Madame and Solange-Claire except that this time the ritual ends with the act of Claire drinking the poisoned tea.

Madame's room, which serves finally as a prison-space for the maids but only a passage-space for Madame herself, contains some features not found in Genet's previous prison cells, notably a mirror, a window with a balcony, and two doors. All of these are symbolic of the possibility of passing from enclosed stage-space to outside space, yet they serve various functions. The window does

not open onto a free view but onto the wall of another apartment building. After the first ritual impersonation, Claire, "suffocating," wishes to open the window, but Solange forbids her to do so. It is as if the closed space containing the ritual must remain intact, like the "airless" cell of *Haute Surveillance*, without contamination from the outside. Only in the fourth scene, where Solange imagines herself as a great criminal, the strangler of her sister, does she open the window and go out on the balcony as if to prepare herself to pass from closed ritual to recognized, freely chosen act. Yet Solange as herself cannot kill Claire; she is able to act only within the circumscribed form. The maids are, they recognize, "fated"; they talk of escaping from the apartment but cannot. The door, for them, leads only to the kitchen and their room, and Solange's speech at the window is a dream from which she retreats. Madame, on the other hand, watches for a taxi through the window and exits through the door to meet Monsieur at a café. The mirror reinforces the space of ritual: it reflects only Claire as Madame.

Like the onstage cellular spaces in *Huis clos* and *Haute Surveillance*, the unique setting of *Les Bonnes* acquires significance and asserts its primacy partly through reference to offstage, imaginary spaces. It appears, first of all, curiously "suspended" because of the absence of normal descriptive referents. For example, we have no idea where the building is located, what floor the apartment is on, how one reaches it. We know nothing about its other rooms except for mention of an antechamber and a kitchen and, in more detail, the maid's loft (*mansarde*). The kitchen, the real Madame tells the maids, is the domain where they are "sovereigns" (*B* 166) and where, Claire-Madame tells Solange-Claire, they should leave their dirty gloves and the other dirt belonging to them. Claire-Madame also describes the sparsely furnished maids' room as an "infecte soupente" (disgusting garret) (*B* 142) from which the maids bring their disgusting odors. Shortly thereafter, Claire-Madame pushes away Solange-Claire with the remark: "Contact with you is loathsome [*immonde*]" (*B* 143). The maids' room is clearly of the stuff of prisons or the lofts of the Montmartre underworld, the dirty, foul reverse side of "your world," the domain of *l'immonde*. Unlike Madame's room, it contains no mirrors, no balconies; like a prison cell it is "sordid and bare" (*B* 148) and Solange imagines Claire in prison as she describes it. It is the

place where love is impossible, for dirt, Solange tells Claire, cannot love dirt.

Madame's room is in one sense a space of make-believe for the maids, in contrast to the bareness of their own room. It is as if two of the qualities of prison superimposed in *Notre Dame* and *Haute Surveillance* (sordid reality and transforming fantasy) were here divided into two spaces. Although Madame's room opens for them only back onto their own space, for a time it opens their imagination into the same prison-dream fostered by other cells: the vision of Guiana.

The penal colony appears in various contexts throughout the play. Claire-Madame first envisions herself as the faithful mistress sharing her lover's "glory" by accompanying him to Guiana. As themselves, imagining their own crime, Claire and Solange also imagine escape from their present situation, their "salvation," as the boat to Guiana. Just before the attempted poisoning, Claire envisions Solange accompanying her to the penal colony where together they will be the "eternal couple of saint and criminal" (*B* 156). At the end of the play, just before the final ritual, Claire assures Solange that, even dead, she will accompany her to the penal colony. "We will be beautiful, free, and happy" (*B* 176).

Escape to Guiana in criminal glory will, however, remain as much a dream as the maids' other fantasy of escape to the free world. When, just before the final scene, Claire and Solange consider robbing Madame and escaping from the apartment, they are incapable of doing so. "Damned" (*maudites*) as Claire says (*B* 168), fated, classified members of *l'immonde*, they cannot simply cross over into "your world." They are even incapable of accomplishing a true crime in that world. Solange's murder of Claire-Madame has finally the same result as LeFranc's murder of Maurice: it is a fake act, an *histoire entre quatre murs* as Green-Eyes said, an action where action is impossible. By the end of the play, all of the openings envisioned appear to have closed in. Solange will not be sent off on a boat to Guiana but will simply continue to inhabit the prison-space that has always been hers. Her crossed hands as the curtain falls indicate the recurrent victory of the cell.

Genet's next play, *Le Balcon*, effects another metamorphosis of the cell, abandoning its "sordid and bare" aspect and intensifying the sumptuousness and make-believe of Madame's room to

produce a "house of illusions," a prison-become-theater. In "Comment Jouer *Le Balcon,*" after deriding all actual representations of his play, Genet indicates how the scenery should be handled: "I want the *tableaux* to succeed one another, the stage sets to move from left to right, *as if they were going to fit into each other under the eyes of the spectator.*[13] Madame Irma reiterates this scenic intention in her own description of the structural properties of her "house of illusions" at the end of *Le Balcon:* "Thirty-eight salons! . . . all gilded, and all, by machinery, able to fit one into the other, to combine" (*Ba* 135). The desired spatial effect is reinformed on stage by the device of the chandelier that, Genet repeatedly insists in the stage directions, should be present unchanged in each scene. The chandelier plays a role similar to that of the "false detail" (such as black lace under Saint Theresa's robe) inscribed in each costume furnished by the house, the detail reminding the client that he is still in the world of fantasy, a more satisfactory state than reality, and the chandelier reminding the spectator that he/she is in the theater, itself a house of illusions where illusions within illusions are being perpetrated for the pleasure of the audience. That the audience is supposed to be in the brothel as well is indicated by Genet's onstage mirror, reflecting "logically" the first orchestra seats but in actuality an unmade bed (*Ba* 39), as well as by Irma's final tirade in which she speaks to the audience as to her clients.

The dominant generating-reabsorbing cell makes *Le Balcon* structurally analogous to *Notre Dame des Fleurs.* The narrator's function in the novel here seems divided between the implied author whose voice speaks in the stage directions and Madame Irma, mistress impresario and creator of the multiple but encased salons. The narrator's generating cell (the "real" space from which the imaginary ones emanate) has evolved into Madame Irma's room from whence, we learn in the fifth tableau, the various salons are observed and controlled. The audience, for whose (sublimated onanistic?) pleasure the scenes are performed is, like the reader in *Notre Dame,* incorporated into the cellular world.

The space of *Le Balcon* is then basically the unified, multiplying and contracting generating cell not, as two different commentators have suggested, a duplex space divided into "closed" brothel and "open" revolution,[14] or divided into the "scenic" space represented on stage and the "dramaturgic" space referred to but not

seen, "the city in which true generals, real judges, and authentic bishops hold the power . . . the place of the queen and the royal palace, . . . the place of reality."[15] The city is never described and only the queen's envoy mentions the royal palace, first comparing it to Irma's house, "Le Grand Balcon" (*Ba* 98) and then evoking its closed, encased structure in which the queen (whose existence is constantly put in doubt) moves from one secret room to another (*Ba* 101)—more like Genet's prison-palace than "the place of reality"! As for the revolutionaries, although theirs is the only scene out-of-doors, they perform their rites and give each other dramatic "cues," *sous le signe du lustre*, under the same chandelier that presides over the series of magic rituals in Madame Irma's salons, and in front of the facade of Le Grand Balcon. At most, the scene between the plumber–revolutionary leader Roger and the prostitute–revolutionary muse Chantal, played in an undefined city square surrounded by screens representing dark walls (tableau 6), represents an attempt to break away from the closed world of Le Grand Balcon, an attempt that must fail as they, both originally of that world, will be reabsorbed into it as if the umbilical cord had never quite been severed.

The first tableau, in which a "bishop" mounted on cothurni appears to have just received confession from a penitent, establishes many of the essential features of the scenes to follow while exhibiting traces of earlier prisons. Unlike the opening scene in *Les Bonnes*, this one does not leave the spectator in a double illusion of identities for long. The second speech, Irma's "two thousand is two thousand, and that's it" (*Ba* 40), tells us immediately that we are dealing with a client, that this house of illusions has a professional, economic base. The contrast, and the intimate (at once comic and sacred) relation between the sordid, humdrum aspects of prison life and its feats of soaring imagination appear here in the context of another closed world. The "bishop," like the "judge" and the "general," like Irma herself later, insists on the importance of closure and secrecy for the sacred space: "Those things must and will remain secret . . . and let all the doors be shut. Oh, shut tight, sealed, buttoned, sewed up" (*Ba* 41). In this enclosure, the bishop will accomplish a rite of further entering into a symbolic closure, a rite of passage to an inner sanctum whose last secret chamber is death. "Ornaments, lace, through you I go back into myself. I reconquer a domain. I lay siege to a very ancient

stronghold from which I was sent away" (*Ba* 45). The lexical stronghold (*place forte*) recalls the imaginary topographical fortress in which the cell of *Haute Surveillance* is said to be situated and the lexical fortress into which Green-Eyes "reconstructs" himself. Lace, often with Genet symbolic of the borderline area between illusion and reality, here seems to act as something of a curtain through which one passes into the domain of the sacred. The mirrors found everywhere in Le Grand Balcon, beyond their role as glorifiers of illusion, also suggest that the characters on stage have, like Alice, passed through them out of "your world" into a reversed world, *l'immonde*. The analogy between the reign of evil in brothel (and theater) and prison is made explicit by the bishop: "Here there is no possibility of doing evil. You live in evil. In the absence of remorse. How could you do evil? The Devil play-acts. . . . He's the Great Actor" (*Ba* 43). His words will be echoed in the next scene by the "judge" in the speech quoted above in relation to *Haute Surveillance* ("Prisons, cells, blessed places where evil is responsible," *Ba* 54).

In the first three tableaux, behind closed doors, the "bishop," "judge," and "general" each complete a ritual designed to carry them from "function" to "mode of being," from existence to essence, from profane to sacred, fundamentally, as in the previous works, the ritual of the prisoner. The "little old man" in the fourth tableau completes another aspect of that ritual, the descent into abjection, signaled by the lice-covered wig he dons at the end.

The fifth tableau carries us backstage, as it were, to Irma's room where the theme of the double nature of the brothel stated at the opening (sacred ritual/economic enterprise) is restated and developed. Doing their accounts, Irma and her favorite, Carmen, discuss the sacred function of their business, Carmen nostalgically recalling her appearance before an accountant as the Virgin Mary. Like a convent, Irma's house is "a severe place," a place demanding that one "refuse the world" in accepting to become part of "our world" (*Ba* 67, 78, 76). As in prison, passage into the domain of the sacred is to be achieved through rigid devotion to abjection or else glorification of that which in "your world" is evil. As Carmen brags to Irma that she is one of the best whores in the house, Irma advises her: "Of course you're right, my dear, to exalt your trade and to make it glorious. Make it shine. Let it illumine you, if it's all you have" (*B* 75). It is significant that

Irma here contrasts "trade" (*métier*) used in this sense with "function," thus articulating the former with what the bishop called "a way of being." It is the exaltation of *métier* (the "evil" nature of prostitution being due to its economic base) like the exaltation of a (purchased) travesty that permits ascent/descent into Le Grand Balcon's realm of pure appearances. Just as the presence of thieves in prison (those who travesty the bourgeois economic order) permitted the prison of *Notre Dame* to "fly" (*les voleurs volant*), just as Divine the transvestite prostitute managed to detach her garret from its building, so Madame Irma has accomplished a similar magic feat with her house, the place where power and love are travestied. "My girl, I have managed to detach it from the earth. . . . It flies. Or if you like, it drifts in the sky where it carries me away with it" (*Ba* 73). In the closed place of travesty severed from "real" earthly, daily life, "Comedy, Appearance stay pure, the Festival intact" (*Ba* 72).

The domain of purity is also the domain of death, as the direction of the house's rituals demonstrate. This is why Irma and her friend the police chief must receive the envoy from the court in the brothel's funeral salon, dominated by the real corpse of the pimp Arthur on a false tomb. Here in the heart of the house of illusions, space of appearance and death, the envoy proposes a kind of resurrection. The clients witnessed in the first three scenes and Madame Irma herself will quench the revolution raging outside by appearing to the people as "real" symbols of power: bishop, judge, general, and queen. To accomplish this, they must move from the closed world onto its extension in the "real" world, the balcony.

A word should be said about the balcony, which gives the play its unique spatial title. Balconies appear elsewhere in Genet: in *Notre Dame des Fleurs* the balcony overlooking the prison courtyard accessible to the prisoner Jean Genet articulates with the balcony of Divine's garret overlooking a cemetery. It is by letting her neighbor's child fall from her balcony that Divine commits the crime that sends her to prison. In *Les Bonnes*, the exalted Solange, fantasizing that she has just strangled her sister, describes from her vantage point on the balcony of Madame's apartment an imaginary funeral parade of servants in which she appears as the Great Criminal accompanied by the executioner. It is just after this tirade that she accomplishes the ritual murder of Claire-

Madame. While the balcony is spatially a structure mediating between an enclosure and the world outside, it seems to function as a foreboder of violence and death, perhaps because of the impossibility of mediation between the two worlds or, as Jean Gitenet has suggested, because death is the dimension "which at once affirms and denies both terms of these pairs" (sacred/profane, illusion/disillusion, destruction/creation).[16] This would explain why Chantal, the one who has attempted to pass from appearance into reality, is killed on the balcony and reabsorbed, as a symbolic saint, into appearance. The balcony does permit the resurrected figures of authority to manifest their appearance to the outside world, but only a beggar is present to cry, "Long live the queen!" Whatever is outside the house of illusions is in fact left totally to the spectator's imagination. The scene on the balcony is replaced quickly by the scene in Irma's room with the photographers, whose function is to transform appearance into reality—"a true image, born of a false spectacle" (*Ba* 113), a triumph of media politics. The photographers (like the balcony) mediate between worlds and, in so doing, kill. Once the images are completed, the envoy announces to the "queen" that her life will be henceforth a kind of death (*Ba* 120).

Thus the resurrection proposed by the envoy has led to a kind of death-in-life far more unsatisfactory than the descent into pure appearance that "bishop," "judge," and "general" were accomplishing by their rituals. Accordingly, these complain to the police chief, who insists that he holds the real power, that they no longer serve his purposes. Says the bishop: "So, we go back into our rooms to pursue the search for absolute dignity. We were fine there and it's you who came to take us out" (*Ba* 118). All attempts to cross over from Le Grand Balcon to the outside have ended in death or failure: Arthur the pimp is killed when he ventures out into the street, Chantal is killed on the balcony, and Roger the revolutionary leader castrates himself, symbolically unmanning the police chief he is impersonating but in fact renouncing his attempt to take power in "reality." It is true that the images have (temporarily) succeeded in quelling the revolution, but their triumph seems due to the fact that they remain, and will return, to a purer appearance.

The police chief's final gesture completes the descending and circular direction in which the drama has been moving. He will

go down the stairs into the special mausoleum salon whose stone walls, like those of the cell in *Haute Surveillance*, are clearly visible. The ordinary "Georges" will be replaced by a police chief of pure being: "Now, I will be able to be good . . . and pious . . . and just . . . greater than great, stronger than strong, deader than dead" (*Ba* 133). Power thus resides intact, in the heart of Madame Irma's house. The ritual of reabsorption has been accomplished, for the outside world, that seemed temporarily to threaten *l'immonde* on the other side of the mirrors, simply no longer exists. We are left, as Irma's last speech (thirty-eight salons fitting into each other) suggests, with a situation of embedding, much like the situation at the end of *Notre Dame des Fleurs*, where all of the generated spaces return (awaiting rebirth) to the generating cell and the fantasies of its impresario-narrator.

While Genet's "house of illusions" bears strong resemblance to all his prisons, the optic in *Le Balcon* is, like that in *Notre Dame des Fleurs, Haute Surveillance*, and *Les Bonnes*, more cellular than collective. Like the novel, *Le Balcon* represents a generating and contracting cell controlled by the imagination of an inmate-impresario-narrator; like the two one-act plays it portrays a drama in four walls that attempts but negates an opening to the outside. However, the severely disciplined brothel run by Madame Irma is also a type of religious community and in this aspect articulates with Genet's second novel, published in 1946, *Miracle de la rose*. The central prison from which the narrator Jean Genet writes is also, he remarks, a "maison d'illusion" (*M* 377).

Genet's interest in writing *Miracle* seems to have been not so much to describe the "liberating" process of cellular meditation and creation (although cellular-monastic rituals play an important role) as to observe the prison within which he is housed and, with an imagination more mythical than lyrical, to attempt to penetrate and recreate its entire physical and spiritual reality. He is interested first of all in its setting: Fontrevault, in the Middle Ages a double monastery inhabited by Augustinian monks and Benedictine nuns under the rule of an abbess, was, like Clairvaux and others, transformed into a prison after the 1789 revolution. In Genet's fantastic/realistic narrative, the structure retains its past, the prisoners becoming at once monks or nuns carrying out medieval rituals and sordid, forgotten, ordinary modern convicts. This dialogue between historical periods and between the com-

monplace and the mystical is complemented by the dialogue in space and time between Fontrevault and the children's reformatory at Mettray, former home of the narrator (again "Jean Genet") and the other major characters. It is in part the more recent roots of Fontrevault in Mettray that allow it to relive its historical past as monastery. The organic growth from the cell that structured *Notre Dame* thus is here replaced by a back-and-forth movement between spatial and temporal levels.

The first paragraph defines the various aspects of the "power" of Fontrevault. Its impact of "distress and desolation," superior to that of other French prisons, derives from its historical past as an abbey, its more recent past as the place from which convicts were shipped to Devil's Island, its role as the "form of the future" for the juvenile inmates of Mettray, and its present function as the sanctuary containing in its "darkest heart" the death cell of the condemned prisoner Harcamone. It is thus the space from which to pursue an unearthing of layers of time, to apprehend time spatially. Like Mettray, Fontrevault is what Genet calls *un espace précis du temps* or a *passé présent* (*M* 317).

Narrative time in *Miracle de la rose*, as Camille Naish points out,[17] is somewhat confusing, for much of the book seems written in a present to which the events narrated are all past (from the dateline La Santé, Prison des Tourelles, 1943?) and other parts, à la *Notre Dame*, "are being written" in the cell. Perhaps the discrepancy can be explained by seeing the novel as a kind of patchwork being constructed by a narrator piecing scraps of paper collected from his past sojourn at Fontrevault together with commentaries from his present position. "Genet" informs the reader, for example, that he began writing the novel (*ce récit*) in his punishment cell (*M* 249) and again that when he went to his daily round in the disciplinary room he hid paper sacks on which he had written "the following" (*ce qui va suivre*) in the toilet bowl (*M* 450). In any case, the reader is led to perceive the work as emanating from the very "heart" of the prison from which one emerges "purified" (*M* 249), that is, the solitary cell (*le mitard*) and the disciplinary room where the prisoners pass their days walking in a silent, "magical" circle. It is important to note that the narrator was put in the disciplinary quarters because his desire to be near the condemned man led him to stray from his prescribed quarters.

Despite its title, *Miracle de la rose* may on one level be read as Genet's *House of the Dead*, a grim, completely unsentimental portrait of the underworld created by "your" (the reader's society's) castoffs with its unrelenting monotony, brutality, stupidity, petty, intricate hierarchies, abjection, and betrayals. Philip Thody goes so far as to see in the novel a scathing piece of social criticism.[18] Genet, however, would seem to have no interest whatsoever in the nineteenth-century liberal notion of prison "reform": indeed he argues (in his radio talk "L'Enfant criminel" as well as in *Miracle*) that children's prisons never should have been abolished (an argument Thody erroneously views as ironic). It is, according to Genet's inverted theology, precisely because of its unmitigated, abject immersion in evil that the prison "shines," transcending linear time to "transgress," as Bataille puts it,[19] to the domain of the eternal. Thus everything connected with "your" world can only contaminate the ascetic venture of the vile antiworld, *l'immonde*. It is for this reason that Genet scoffs briefly at political prisoners. Although the events recounted in Fontrevault appear timeless, we are in wartime and one of the bad effects of the war has been to put in prison people who have done nothing to "deserve" it, thus tarnishing the lordly purity of the realm of evil (*M* 243).

Fontrevault is a domain created and inhabited by convicts, where guards and other figures of authority appear as passing shadows and people from the outside not at all. We learn something of the different types of crime, the hierarchical divisions between pimps and burglars (*macs* and *casseurs*), and something of Genet's own career in burglary. For the first time, Genet is able to view prison life under the crude light of reality, devoid of its sacred aspects.

> I see the prison bare, divested of its sacred vestments, and its bareness is cruel. The inmates are nothing but poor fellows with teeth eaten away by scurvy, backs bent with illness, spitting and coughing. They go from the dormitory to the workshop in huge loud wooden shoes, they drag along in cloth slippers. . . . They stink. They are cowardly before the turnkeys who are as cowardly as they. (*M* 246)

Yet among these creatures exist complex relationships, not only sexual and exploitative, but those of love and friendship. Genet's

own relationship with the young Bulkaen, the only real thread of plot, is one of these but, like Swann's love for Odette, more than itself. In Bulkaen Genet recognizes a fellow being "destined" for prison, for whom prison constitutes a fatality and who, like himself, loves prison. Bulkaen is essentially the means through which the lost Mettray will be conjured up and with it the magical or sacred powers from which the narrator had thought himself freed. "If my memories of the Reformatory are awakened in me especially by Bulkaen, by his presence, by his effect on me, the danger will be double for my love for him has already made me risk surrender to the old powers of Prison" (*M* 248).

It is this dangerous route that Genet pursues in the course of the novel. The now destroyed reformatory of his childhood with its hierarchical divisions, its cruel sadism, and especially the intense loves and fantasies of its adolescent inmates imposes itself on Fontrevault, unmasking the beauty and poetry hidden in the sordid prisoners, recalling that Fontrevault was once a feudal chapel whose village, Mettray, lay at its feet. It is this rediscovery, the constant superimposition of past on present, that enables Genet to pursue as narrator an ascetic self-examination along with a metaphorical and spiritual transformation of the prison. Re-creation of a prison within a prison becomes, as he knows, a self-perpetuating trap, an assent that one is forever bound. Yet precisely because of its limits, in the monastic-romantic tradition, prison, like religion, opens onto the infinite.

> Through horror of the infinite, religions imprison us in a universe as limited as the prison universe—but as unlimited too, for in prison our desire illuminates sudden perspectives, discovers fresh gardens. . . . It projects them onto the thick walls and sometimes the heart is so minutely explored that a secret chamber is opened, allowing a ray to pass through, to light on the door of a cell and to reveal God. (*M* 256)

Like the flying prison and the flying brothel in *Notre Dame* and *Le Balcon*, the prison of Fontrevault inverts the physical laws of "your world." Finitude opens to infinite, down becomes up, and heaviness lightness. Although Frontrevault is located at the bottom of a valley, it seems to be on top of a mountain. Everything pertaining to the prison has at once the weight of lead and the "sickening lightness of cork" (*M* 280). Convicts "precipitate" out of the

world of the living to soar to a precipice among the land of the dead, for we are, Genet informs the reader several times, among the dead. (One is reminded of the geography of the *Inferno* where the mountain of purgatory was formed by the same satanic plunge that created the depths of hell.) With the same paradoxical logic, the huge mass of stone becomes metaphorically transformed into a ship voyaging out to sea.

The represented narrator "Jean Genet" pursues a monastic-ascetic regime, plunging into the confines of the self in order to contact the infinite, dying in the world in order to be spiritually reborn. As in the prison novel tradition, the house of the dead is the place of rebirth, not only for Genet but for his "brothers" who, as it were, sprang from the common womb of Mettray. Rain, at Fontrevault, transforms the stone structure into something sweet and protective, "a shapeless prenatal mass" (*M* 319). The meeting of polar opposites in death and rebirth restates the physical inversions described above (closure/infinity, depth/height, heaviness/lightness). Genet's description of his "disgusting" lovemaking with Divers, his former companion from Mettray and the betrayer of Harcamone, outlines a movement permeating the entire work.

> I am carried away in that fall which, by its speed and its verticality, cuts all the strings that tie me to the world [*monde*], burying me in the prison, in *l'immonde*, in a hellish dream-world, to land at last in a garden of holiness where roses bloom. (*M* 392)

The passage from *le monde* to *l'immonde* is thus, as for Alice, a fall into Wonderland, the antiworld. The movement culminates in Genet's final ascetic exercise, his mystical communion with Harcamone in the final hours before his execution, and the "miracle of the rose."

The condemned prisoner's cell, somewhat like the anchorite's cell found next to the church in early Benedictine monasteries, occupies a privileged place in the inverted monastery at Fontrevault. Genet describes it early in the novel as the illuminated chapel toward which the prisoners' prayers are directed. Characterized by its airlessness and darkness, the cell is the part of the prison most completely cut off from "your" world. After Harcamone was condemned to death (before he killed a prison guard his sentence was life imprisonment) his cell became "infernal." As in *Huis clos*,

hell is not characterized by the fantastic and the horrible but by minute changes in an ordinary setting. Here the changed details are three: the window of the cell is half bricked up, the open grill on the door can be closed by a small grate "like the Judas-holes in convents," and a high stool is posted outside the cell so that a guard can keep constant watch. Within this most restricted setting, the condemned man will travel.

Harcamone, with Genet's spiritual assistance, will proceed from the greatest restriction to the greatest liberty, a process first described by a theatrical metaphor. Outside the penitentiary, in "freedom," Harcamone, like an actor offstage, has no particular interest; indeed Genet's account of the events leading up to his first murder show him to be a common, if extraviolent country boy. In order to "dazzle" the other convicts, Harcamone requires the freedom of the tragic actor: the limits of the stage itself in space and time and the certainty of catastrophe. Thus Harcamone, enclosed in his cell during the last days of his life, will, in Genet's account, acquire magic powers that allow him to fly out of his cell and return to it and will, like a tragic figure, grow larger than life-size, representing not only himself but the entire community.

The last few pages of *Miracle* are devoted primarily to Genet's account of his spiritual exercises aimed at "saving" Harcamone. Directing all of his mental efforts toward the condemned prisoner, he discovers Harcamone's cell *within himself*. He keeps constant vigil for four nights but at last betrays his saint by falling into the arms of Divers, who reportedly caused Harcamone's arrest. Yet since betrayal is in Genet's inverted theology a cardinal virtue, this relationship enables him to commune more closely with the figure who opens the prisoners' collective soul to "extreme abjection."

In Genet's final vision of Harcamone and the "miracle of the rose" the poles of past/present, falling/rising, death/rebirth, closed/infinite, temporal/eternal, reality/dream, poles between which the novel has vacillated, synthesize their dialectic. Within the inverted monastery Harcamone plays the role of a saint or even a Christ. (At one point in Genet's vision voices outside the condemned man's window shout, "Kill him, kill him!") The souls of the other inmates are in his hands and his preparation for death enacts a ritual of rebirth. Genet, painfully exerting all his mental energies to help Harcamone break out of his cell, serves as a kind of midwife. Once this outbreak is achieved, the naked and trans-

figured Harcamone, as if leaving his infernal cell for purgatory, climbs a series of stairs, pauses before various doors, and arrives at last before a cell containing three murderers bound for the penal colony in Guiana Harcamone is surely here on the threshold of the earthly paradise:

> We knew that, behind the door, there was Guiana with its sun, the sea crossed, death vanquished. Behind the door, there were three murderers awaiting their departure for the penal colony. . . . They offered him the peace of a Guiana bathed with sun and shade, with palm trees and evasions, in the coolness of a straw hat. (*M* 458)

But Harcamone must push on beyond the earthly paradise to fulfill his destiny. Returning to his cell, he expands so that he "fills the universe" and offers within himself a vision of the gateway to paradise, the mystic rose.

Genet's visionary account of Harcamone's execution shows the judge, the lawyer, the chaplain, and the executioner, small as bedbugs, mounting the gigantic Harcamone and descending inside of him until they discover the rose and fall into a pit in its center. Thus the forces of order, the seats of power in the prison, are absorbed and engulfed into the very essence of criminality. With Harcamone's apotheosis the inversion of the monastery is accomplished, the prison's multiplicity in space, time, and spirit unified.

If Genet abandons the prison as primary setting in the rest of his fiction, he returns to the search for a unifying myth of prison in the autobiographical narrative *Journal d'un voleur*. Here Genet portrays himself as narrator not from the point of view of confinement, but as a kind of picaresque hero roaming across Europe, experiencing the world. The world he experiences, however, is still *l'immonde*, underworld and antiworld, separated from ours by an insurmountable barrier, composed of men for whom prison is a destiny and "freedom" only a temporary state. The image of the mirror, which Genet would develop in his ballet *Adame miroir*, conveys the nature of the barrier. The "tough" Armand has a nose crushed "for having bumped against the mirrors that separate us from your world" (*J* 268). A description of Genet's pal Stilitano caught in a hall of mirrors at a fair, victim of a "crystal prison" (*J* 282), shows another man hopelessly at odds with our world.

Genet's search for a myth of prison here comprises not a meditation from the heart of one as in *Miracle*, but the experience of several, and a more intellectualized view of the penal system as a whole. This he sees in two parts, the "real" central prisons that dot France (and have their analogues in the rest of Europe) and the "ideal" penal colony in Guiana that France has abolished and which Genet feels that he needs to re-create within himself.

The abolition of the penal colony by a liberal, reformist society has had, according to Genet, dire spiritual consequences for the criminal. "The end of the penal colony prevents us from access with our live consciousness into mythical subterranean regions" (*J* 11). Crime and punishment, for Genet as for Dostoyevski, are interdependent. Severe punishment, as Genet outlined most clearly in "L'Enfant criminel," helps to cut the links with "your world" and to reinforce the criminal in his rejection of it. Devil's Island, a place physically separated from "your world" and a society composed entirely of criminals, constituted the ideal environment in which to sever those links; it was thus an aspiration and a hope for those of *l'immonde* but still in France. The colony is in a sense a purer form of the domain of evil.

The pursuit of evil is accompanied, in Genet's myth, by the search for love, and in the ideal convict prison these opposites meet. As the hardest convicts seem to blossom into flowers, erotic games flourish in Genet's ideal Guiana. The abolition of the penal colony is a kind of castration as well as an "amputation of infamy." Thus it is through love, or more aptly its mirror image, erotic humiliation, that Genet approaches the re-creation of a mythical inner *bagne*. Through his "male," Armand, who appears to him the convict prison's "most illustrious representative" (*J* 268), Genet is able to approach his mythical Guiana, "the ideal region of misfortune and of penitence toward which not only my physical person but that which oversees it turns—with a fear mingled with consoling ecstasy" (*J* 269). Guiana now seems the goal born of what Sartre called Genet's decision to become what crime had made of him. Abjection, unhappiness, and suffering are the natural ends of one whose life is preordained by a mechanical social system and by his passive assent to that system. Yet on the other side of abjection and despair, the penal colony "purifies" the criminal, affirms him in opposition to society in the antiworld, makes possible a rebirth. Guiana, like Mettray, becomes a mother.

A passage in which its cruel qualities are transformed into kindness expresses the paradox of this final stage.

> This place seems to contain dryness and the cruelest avidity but suddenly it seems to express a theme of goodness: it conjures up and imposes the image of a maternal breast. (*J* 270)

The *bagne intime* to which Genet aspires will be reached after crossing "a country in myself called Spain," country he associates with aridity and cruelty, with asceticism and the rites of purification. By the end of his journal, Genet has succeeded in turning his search inward, in replacing with a spiritual goal the abolished Devil's Island.

An ideal penal colony literally frames the *Journal.* In the first paragraph Genet compares convicts, with their striped costumes, to flowers; in the last he proposes a sequel to his autobiography in which he will re-create the inner penal colony, *ces fêtes d'un bagne intime* (*J* 286). Within this framework appear the prisons of Genet's actual experience along with reflections on the nature of prison and prison life. Genet's account of his first imprisonment seems to confirm Sartre's thesis that his original situation in the world was already an exile, a condition of utter solitude to which prison offered a temporary contrast, society and security: "Prison offered me the first consolation, the first peace, the first friendships: it was in the *immonde*" (*J* 91). Upon entering prison, Genet seems to pass through the wall of mirrors and to find his niche in the antiworld. Created by society to be a separated entity, the prison is a "perfect" architectural structure, self-contained and self-sufficient. Viewed from the inside, it can become a royal palace giving the inmate the same sense of security as the guest of a king (*J* 93). Its outer severity and inner splendor are in fact mirror images: the protection offered by the king reflects the "security" that stands guard over the prisoners; the strict and precise rules of the prison are, as Genet puts it, of the same "essence" as court etiquette (*J* 93). But the prison-palace is also a self-spun cocoon. Genet comes to believe that his prison, like the court (*Palais de Justice*) that stands before it, have their foundations within him, are built for him in order to satisfy his most violent tendencies (*J* 94). Punishment and humiliation are for the prisoner needs as real as security. Present imprisonment seems the visible sign of a

mythical past. Genet crystallizes the paradoxical nature of prison with oxymorons: he wonders if he once lived in "sumptuous miseries" or if his abjection was "magnificent" (*J* 94).

Criminals dream of a tight, closed organization or a well-ordered antisociety but this can exist only in prison: "the ideal cave, the bandits' hide-out where the forces of the world come to break" (*J* 105). However, this cave, which seems to protect criminals from "the world's" social laws and customs and to give them an opportunity to develop their own, turns out to be a fake. The only real bond among the prisoners is their common state as outcasts or their rejection of any social values. The world's forces do not break against the prison's walls; they create them. Thrown together in physical proximity, the prisoners find fleeting sexual contacts, friendships, even solidarity, but in the final analysis each one is condemned to solitude. Genet recounts his own experience of solitude, passage from *l'immonde* to *non-monde*, in the anecdote of the Yugoslav prison already told in *Notre Dame*.

Thus the security and the society that *l'immonde* seemed to offer prove to be an illusion. Alone in a cell, Genet hears the sound of a fellow prisoner's footsteps that, rather than giving him a sense of solidarity, remind him that he is "prisoner of a clear, sudden, regular step" (*J* 117). Looking back on his experience, he perceives solitude as a state to be achieved through discipline, a desirable limitation, an ordering of confusion (*J* 258). The *mitard* or solitary cell, the furthest point one can reach in the present penal system, will aid him in his search. The creation of a prison myth finally fuses with a personal venture, the "pursuit of impossible nothingness" (*J* 100), as Genet names his book.

Journal d'un voleur gives us, among other things, a particular view of the political scene in Europe during the thirties and forties. Genet attempted to deal with his vision of wartime politics in only one novel, *Pompes Funèbres*, published in 1947. As Richard Coe has remarked, Genet's third and fourth novels mark a break with the primarily autobiographical mode of his first two, a mode to which *Journal d'un voleur* is a temporary return.[20] With the attempt to transcend autobiography comes a break with the fictional centrality of prison, both with the cell as organizing space and with prison as myth. Both *Pompes Funèbres* and Genet's fourth novel, *Querelle de Brest*, are set in the open, in an entire city; yet as if Genet could not entirely abandon his generating cell, brief

scenes of imprisonment play a crucial role in each. The prison scene in *Pompes Funèbres* serves as *mise en abîme*, crystallizing the novel's central, political themes.

In his third novel, Genet manipulates levels of reality and of time in a more complex but less successful manner than in the previous two. The levels are four: the biographical information that Jean Descarnin, Genet's lover, was killed while fighting for the Resistance, and the narrator "Jean Genet's" avowed purpose to compose his "funeral rites"; the actuality of the Nazi occupiers, the Gestapo, the collaborating French *Milice*, the final days of the liberation of Paris; "Jean Genet's" presence at Descarnin's funeral, his memories of their love affair, his acquaintance with Jean's mother, brother Paulo, and the mother's lover Erik Seiler, a Nazi officer hiding out after the liberation: and, finally, the "invented" character Riton who killed Descarnin—his past, his love affair with Erik during a shoot-out (the Germans and *Milice* against the resisters) during the liberation—and pasts invented for other characters, in particular Erik and Paulo. The fourth, imaginary level not only dominates in space but eventually absorbs all of the others into itself so that the liberation of Paris (the second level) becomes a backdrop to the final scene on the rooftops between Riton and Erik and Riton's murder of Erik logically negates Erik's "real" appearance in the Descarnin apartment after the liberation (third level). The writer Genet's love (the first level) is absorbed, or exorcised, as Riton, buggered by Erik, pronounces the sentence, "Now I have the impression that I love you more than before," and the narrator comments, "This sentence was offered to me three months ago by Jean, and I place it on the mouth of a *milicien* just buggered by a German soldier" (*PF* 161).

It is perhaps the disappearance of the prison as frame, or setting from which the novel is ostensibly being written, that is responsible for this annihilation of "fact" in blatant fiction. Without the fixed and circumscribed space of the prison as reference point, as in the earlier novels, Genet must invent a location from which the implied writer-narrator "Genet" is composing *Pompes Funèbres*. The setting, obviously and almost comically contrived, appears to have been borrowed from the stage props for a romantic opera: "I am writing this book near a monastery standing straight in the middle of the forest, among the rocks and thorns" (*PF* 10).

The (fake) monastery bears traces of Fontrevault, from which Genet is now excluded, but which he seems to need to reinvent as a generator of fiction. Yet for the first time he develops his primary themes, the pursuit of evil and moral solitude, in a context outside of *l'immonde*, if in the closed world of occupied Paris. His interest focuses on the French *Milice*, to which Riton belongs, the military arm of the Vichy government. Unlike the Nazis, who are the accepted rulers in their country, the collaborating *Milice* are viewed as traitors in theirs, a group of loners despised by the "good" resisting French. They are thus a kind of social equivalent of the abject prisoner-traitor, the one who reaches the heights of moral solitude. Recruited from the outcasts of French society, the *Milice* seem to realize an ideal group (heretofore envisioned only in prison) in which thieves and murderers are approved socially for their criminal qualities. A group of criminals functioning as policemen also realizes the ideal mingling of those two poles, epitomized by the criminal Riton handcuffing a courageous *maquisard* (*PF* 131). In Genet's fantasy of occupied Paris, the reversed values he found in *l'immonde* come into the open; the "good" qualities of patriotism, honor, and courage are, on the contrary, underground. Genet focuses on this topsy-turvy state in the novel's brief prison scene.

After a riot at an unnamed prison, and a brief period of control by inmates, the authorities surround the prison, cut off its water supply, and regain control. A captain of the militia then begins to question the inmates, convinced that the political prisoners are the leaders of the riot. Desiring that most abject form of evil, betrayal, Genet (with a rather disconcerting procedure he uses throughout *Pompes Funèbres*) "slips into" a certain Pierrot. With arbitrary malice, in the company of the captain, Pierrot goes from crowded cell to crowded cell, pointing his finger at the "guilty ones." The captain knows he is lying, but does not care; Pierrot is hated and disdained by everyone, thus experiencing the extreme point of solitude, the ecstasy of betrayal. The crowded cells cinematically fade out to the crowded *métro* cars where Erik's penis first encounters Riton's buttocks. After executing twenty-eight innocent boys, Riton is seen submitting himself to a Nazi.

Pierrot, muses the captain, has played a role in the prison comparable to that of the *Milice* in France, both are "born to betray" (*PF* 124). The comparison points out the role of the prison

scene as *mise en abîme:* the innocent are in prison and put to death, the evil, abject, and treacherous are in power; solidarity is with the prisoners, solitude with the police—the bourgeois world is turned inside out. *L'immonde* no longer intact as refuge, kingdom, and anchor for creation, Genet's view of an unbelievable contemporary political reality dissolves in fantasy.

That the man who set out to pursue evil to its very core through the reversal of all bourgeois values within *l'immonde* should be fascinated with the figure of Hitler should come as no surprise, but the nature and degree of Genet's attraction to Nazism, and its relation to his later political evolution remains puzzling. In a 1976 interview, Genet explains his fascination by his awareness as a child that France was not "home" to him, that because he was only a foundling, a stranger, France was his oppressor. "The fact that the French army, the most renowned one in the world thirty years ago, capitulated before the troops of an Austrian corporal, made me absolutely ecstatic. I could only adore the man who had brought about the downfall of France. Subsequently I could only join all those suppressed colored peoples who revolted against the whites."[21] Unlike Sartre and other French intellectuals, Genet did not need to make the painful change from patriotism to protest between the Resistance and the Algerian war; his stance of revolt and opposition remained intact. Even so, he does not equate the role of the occupying oppressor with that of the revolt of the colonized oppressed. The manifestation of Nazism in its ultimate and purest form—the concentration camps—Genet seems to reason through a metaphor in "L'Enfant criminel," is simply an outgrowth and exaggerated form of bourgeois France's own creation, its prison system. While the newspapers abound with reports of the brutality committed in the camps, no one speaks of the tortures endured by adults and children in common French prisons. The bourgeois who perished in the "giant plant" of the Hitlerian camps had sowed the seed of that plant with their own prison system and Genet "rejoices to see the sower devoured." The metaphorical plant itself comes to resemble the miracle of the rose, a flower of evil: "a rose whose twisted, turned up petals, showing their red and pink under a diabolical sun, bear dreadful names: Maïdenek, Belsen, Auschwitz, Mauthausen, Dora" (*OC* 5:389).

If Genet became frustrated with the Nazis, it is because they seemed to have attained too easily, and without sacrifice, the state

of exile or reversal of values that he had been struggling to attain through his ascetic rites. "They are in infamy like a fish in water" (*PF* 109). As he remarks in *Journal d'un voleur*, a world in which criminality is the order of the day prevents the revolt necessary for the attainment of moral solitude. Yet Hitler himself, a distant, two-dimensional figure in *Pompes Funèbres* (and in *Journal*), appears almost as an allegory of this quality: "sparkling" with solitude on top of a mountain (*PF* 81), in a glass cage within a fortress on a summit in the Bavarian Alps, dominating history. Hitler, it would appear, has attained on the grand scale (or perhaps we should say this allegorical Hitler represents) the state to which Genet aspires and which he defines eloquently in "L'Atelier d'Alberto Giacometti": "Solitude, as I understand it, does not mean misery but rather a secret royalty, profound incommunicability but a more or less obscure knowledge of an impregnable singularity" (*OC* 5:53).

By the time he wrote his last novel, *Querelle de Brest*, Genet had "written his way out of prison," but still retained a vestige of former prisons as a crucial, if minor space in the novel. There is no frame in *Querelle*, no intrusive narrator narrating, no generating cell, not even a stage-set monastery from which the text is "being written." Instead, the ruined monastery and the prison fuse to become a ruined prison, a central setting for two of the characters rather than the narrator, a setting that functions as counterpoint to the novel's main theme: experimentation with total freedom.

"The idea of murder often evokes the idea of sea and sailors" (*Q* 173) reads the first line of *Querelle*, and as the novel evolves, the sea, and another fluid element, the fog, become associated with the dizzying freedom of crime as the solid enclosures in the town of Brest signal the threat of or yearning for punishment. The latter include the stone ramparts surrounding the town, the brothel "La Feria" guarded by its iron spikes, and, especially, the former convict prison beyond the city walls.

The ruined convict prison eventually will house the novel's two murderers, Georges Querelle and Gil Turko. Without Raskolnikov's intellectual motives, but following the Dostoyevskian pattern, Querelle seeks freedom in crime and limits in punishment. After cutting the throat of a comrade while enshrouded in fog, he pursues a new goal: a place "remote as a cell," secluded enough for a judgment spot. Having found the traditional site of judgment, a tree, Querelle goes on to imagine a court-room, a judge's accusa-

tion, a death sentence. Not out of repentance, but as if in obedience to a social pattern so strong that it has become internalized. Querelle seeks out a prison. In a ritualistic vision, he passes over, as it were, into *l'immonde*, and toward its inverted earthly paradise.

> He felt that his body was already dressed in convict uniform and that, dragging the cannon ball chained to his foot, he was walking slowly and painfully in a landscape of monstrous palm trees—a region of dreams or of death—from which neither awakening nor men's acquittal could release him. (*Q* 277)

The passing over into the sacred area grants Querelle power "to have immediate and complete knowledge of the essence of things" (*Q* 277). It also prepares his actual entrance into the ruined prison, where he feels that he is "moving obscurely towards a defunct but happy former existence" (*Q* 278). He responds to the need for repose, which the prison offers, but feels threatened as the walls of the dungeon seem to be moving in to crush him. Querelle is determined to maintain his freedom, to enter his (freely chosen) prison as a "conquering hero" rather than to allow himself to be engulfed by it. He alone among Genet's protagonists is allowed to experience the advantages of prison without the disadvantages. This is because he has managed to find a "double," Gil, a young man he will befriend, love, and betray. Gil has committed a murder himself and, in addition, since Querelle manages to frame him, he will be convicted eventually for the murder Querelle has committed (while Querelle will go off on a cruise). Thus Querelle will have the glorious freedom of crime along with the solace of limits and punishment, the grasp of "essences," and the discovery of self in prison, but Gil will bear the brunt of guilt, anxiety, actual arrest, and imprisonment.

Gil also seeks out the ruined prison after committing his crime but, in contrast to the conquering Querelle, hides there quaking with fear and anxiety. While Querelle, in his encounters with Gil in the prison, succeeds in dropping off his murder on the younger man's shoulders, Gil must undergo his own bout with cell and solitude, a metamorphosis that is outlined in some detail. The movement proceeds from a sense of anxiety and despair over lost freedom (represented by the opposition of the old stone walls to Gil's view of the sea) toward a painful realization of and accep-

tance of solitude (together with a heightening of visionary and imaginative powers) to an attachment to the cell as a real home. Like the cells in Fresnes and Fontrevault, Gil's serves to compress and intensify the inhabitant's perception and imagination. As Gil grows more isolated from the outside world, more a part of his prison, his sensitivity to sounds from the other side of the walls grows more acute. Gil undergoes, as Genet tells us, an "initiation into the mysteries of poetry" (*Q* 284); he becomes a primitive maker of metaphors and symbols. Limited to the perception of sounds, he begins to exercise powers of synesthesia. Certain "clear ringing tones" evoke for him sunlight striking brass or the play of foam on waves. In a further development the liberty symbolized by the sea now can be evoked in his highly tuned mind by the mere sound of a grinding chain.

Gil's experience illustrates one of the basic principles of Genet's aesthetic. An image, a sound, a memory, something apparently insignificant may open up a "fissure" through which a new mode of perception becomes possible. Thus it is that by staring fixedly at an end of tarred rope, Gil begins to apprehend "violently and at once the essence of things" (*Q* 285). This grasp of essences leads him back to himself, to a fundamental understanding of his real and utter solitude. From that vantage point, he tries to learn to "will" his crime, to make it his own—an idea obviously borrowed from Sartre—and thus to accept his isolation from the rest of humanity. His prison becomes symbolic of his solitude in crime as well as a substitute punishment. The original pattern is reinforced when Gil leaves his hide-out to help Querelle commit a robbery. After the crime, he yearns for his "home": "As the prison came nearer, so Gil felt a sense of security and calm returning" (*Q* 318). Finally, he finds himself accustomed to the life of a recluse, reigning there like the archaic king in his palace in *Notre Dame des Fleurs*.

Although it continues to embody the themes of old, the prison in *Querelle* has lost much of its religious significance as well as its spatial dominance and in this sense is indeed a prison ruin. While Genet returns to the complex of prison themes and generation through cellular space in *Le Balcon*, as we have seen, he appears to abandon it almost entirely with his penultimate play, *Les Nègres*, produced in 1959.

Rather than embedding, the stage setting in *Les Nègres* represents platforms at different levels, and the referential space offstage is conveyed to the audience as something "real," of a nature other than theatrical, the site of a revolution that refuses to be reabsorbed into illusion. Yet, it is only the illusory world, domain of ritual, poetry, theater, that can be represented on stage. Conjured by the impresario Archibald whose role suggests but does not really parallel that of Madame Irma and the narrator of *Notre Dame*, this world retains traces of *l'immonde*. Like criminals and other figures of the underworld, the blacks cultivate their "negativity," or that which makes them despised and feared by whites. "We are what people want us to be, so we will be it to the end, absurdly" (*N* 179). Archibald seems to speak from the *Journal* or, indeed, from Sartre's biography. The willful cultivation of the negative image is an act altogether different from mere passive acceptance of the whites' (or other "masters") dictates; it is creation, poetry, play. *Les Nègres* carries further a process begun in *Haute Surveillance* and developed in *Le Balcon:* the transformation of prison into theater. Archibald recalls both origin and process: "On this stage we are like convicts playing convicts in prison" (*N* 58). The "play," or the transformation of situation into art, is the means of liberation that Genet has pursued in all of his work, but here he tentatively explores another as well, the "real" revolution, a referential space outside the theater for which the play-acting serves as mask.

Genet's last play, *Les Paravents* (produced in 1966), while carrying a step further his ability to deal with the world "outside," with political reality in theater, nonetheless returns to the representation of a prison that serves as a core, a centripetal space. This time, Genet presents the dual spaces, conveyed in *Les Nègres* through reference, directly on stage: open-revolution-reality/closed-prison-poetry-theater. As in the case of *Le Balcon*, the mediator between the two spatial complexes is signified in the title, but rather than a tentative projection of closed onto (hardly existent) open, the screens constitute a movable and flimsy barrier that may, as the play shows, be broken through. Although roads, fields, and even battles between the colonized Algerians and the French colonizers are represented onstage, every precaution is taken, in a manner outdoing Brecht's, to prevent the audience's

"culinary" confusion of stage play with reality. The screens that create the various decors also remind the spectators that they are still, after all, in a house of illusions.

The multifaceted spatial and narrative texture of *Les Paravents* has at its center a story that restates one of Genet's continuous themes: a quest for abjection. An essential element in the quest carried out by the Arab Saïd and his wife Leila, a prison appears in the decor, first its facade in the fifth tableau, then its interior in the eleventh and sixteenth. Situated as it were opposite Fontrevault (in the valley where opposites meet), the prison in this mythical Algeria is on a hill, dominating the village, and costs some effort to reach. When Saïd is arrested for theft, his mother and Leila appear to understand that his crime was part of a plan rather than a mere mistake stemming from profane greed. Taleb, the man from whom he stole, and the other villagers, claim that Saïd's objective was to go to France, earn money, and "buy" himself another wife. Leila objects, "But instead of leaving me he let himself get caught, beat up, and locked in prison up above us" (*P* 198). The mother affirms, "Saïd is doing what he wants. He's in prison" (*P* 198), and threatens Taleb when he says he has dropped his charges. She later refers to his return to prison as a "triumph" (*P* 206). Saïd's first sojourn in prison appears to effect changes reminiscent of those in *Haute Surveillance:* Saïd is altered by the "lack of air"; Leila recognizes that she is "all alone" (*P* 200, 201).

Saïd's desire to return to prison becomes evident in the seventh tableau, where he pleads with the Algerian judge, the *Cadi*, to sentence him. In the ninth tableau, created, according to Genet, in order to demonstrate the degradation of Saïd and his family, Leila makes her own decision to will her negativity: "To the jug. With Saïd. Since we have to go from town to town, we might as well go from prison to prison . . . with Saïd" (*P* 230). The wish of both is realized in the eleventh tableau, where the magical, poetic, transforming properties of prison present themselves on the stage. In a ritual that seems a brief epitome of the exhausting processes of *Notre Dame* or *Miracle*, the dialogue between Saïd and his wife makes use of *argot* and vulgarities to become almost operatic, a chant. In their efforts they are guided by the guardian (angel) who, commenting on the "songs" of the death-row prisoners, calls Saïd and Leila "apprentices."

Saïd's and Leila's quest for abjection continues after they are freed from prison; Saïd informs Leila that prison is "only the beginning" (*P* 287). In a gesture recalling briefly the dream of Guiana, Saïd draws a "magnificent palm tree" (*P* 290) on one of the screens. But here the ritual immersion in *l'immonde* is accompanied by a new sense that, as Leila puts it, "Europe's nothing anymore. It's bugging off" (*P* 288). It is now not merely by going counter to European values that Saïd will achieve degradation—that is being done by the revolutionaries—in order to reach the state of moral solitude that will produce "song" he also must betray his countrymen. Betrayal, the ultimate "virtue" in Genet's negative theology, here as in *Pompes Funèbres* takes on a political, or rather counterpolitical connotation. When Saïd has betrayed and is condemned to death by the revolutionaries, he is ready, as the prison guardian, the inspired woman Ommou, and the mother affirm, to "sing."

Genet's political convictions, at least as they are expressed in his literary works, remain a subject of critical controversy. Just as his admiration of the "beauty" of the Nazi occupiers in *Pompes Funèbres* did not signify embracing their politics, so in *Les Paravents* the value accorded Algerian "ugliness" against the hollow platitudes of colonialism does not automatically lead to a celebration of the revolution. While it is obviously true that, by the time he wrote his last play, Genet was more politically involved than when he wrote *Notre Dame* or even *Pompes Funèbres*, Richard Coe's contention that Genet's "practical intelligence" wins out over his individual sympathies to value the Algerian soldiers (who appear only at the end of the play) against the proponents of "song" remains unconvincing.[22] Lewis Cetta seems closer to the truth in finding Genet's sympathies to be with Saïd, who has achieved liberation through solitude.[23] As Genet warns us in *Les Nègres* that the victorious black revolutionaries risk adopting the manners and sinking into the decadence of their former masters, he has an Algerian soldier utter a troubling thought: "I feel that logic is arming our minds. Before long we'll all be Cartesians" (*P* 371). Opposing this tendency with "Long live song," Ommou (recalling Félicité of *Les Nègres*) upholds not merely the non-Western value system, but the principle of the irrational, of art, and of the domain of the female.

It is in this context that one must view the other "closed

world" that appears throughout *Les Paravents*, the brothel. An offspring of Le Grand Balcon, the house presided over by the matriarchal Warda is a severe place where whores perfect their trade into an art in the service of God (*P* 178). In contrast to *Le Balcon*, where the closed eternal world of poetry absorbed into itself all attempts to transform the temporal world, here the revolution destroys the house of illusions. It is "fresh air," we learn in the fifteenth tableau, that effectively kills Warda, and in the preceding scene she laments to her colleague Malika the demise of their reign.

> You, too, feel the air, space and time circulating around us just like anyone else. The brothel's no longer the brothel and, so to speak, we're screwing out in the open . . . the night that surrounded us, who blew it away? (*P* 312)

It is not the European colonizers that have destroyed this particular antiworld—on the contrary, their system was a positive that engendered the negative—but the Algerian soldiers armed with the male and occidental virtues of courage, logic, and practicality. The question must then be asked: will the success of revolutions against the European bourgeois world destroy the antiworlds that that world produced, the domain of *l'immonde*, and of poetry? It is against this possibility that Saïd doggedly pursues the transformation of abjection into "song" and the other characters—Warda, the mother, Leila, Ommou—all female, created from what one might call Genet's archaic sensibility, attempt to preserve a dying order of things. It would seem that Genet as poet is reluctant to relinquish prison and its related spaces, that he can never completely write himself out of the cell that originally gave him the spiritual freedom to create.

The three broad categories of textual prisons in Genet's work—the generating cell, the prison or parallel closed world as myth, and the prison as *mise en abîme*—all demonstrate the centrality of prison topography as function and index. While various textual confinements are just as central to the other writers under consideration here, one major difference lies in Genet's refusal of prison as metaphor, as representation of the "human condition," social, metaphysical, or psychological, or of anything relating it directly to "your world." In this sense Genet is closer to those eye-

witness writers on concentration camps for whom the camp was totally "other"—closer to the imagination's vision of hell than to practical understanding of the world—and for whom knowledge acquired in the camp was thus "useless knowledge." Yet Genet differs from these writers too in that whereas they predominately use prose to communicate, at least to attempt to tell the reader "how it was," he predominately uses poetry to entrap, that is to lure the bourgeois reader, by means of his/her own language, into the antiworld in which the text is generated. More than Malraux's, Camus's, or Sartre's, Genet's narratives and dramas are overwhelmingly spatial, generated from a cell and reabsorbed into it or composed in layers of time within a closed world where historical time from "your world" rarely enters. When his texts are no longer set primarily in prison, Genet retains a nostalgia for the prison as generator and as organizing myth in stories that openly contrast "your world" and *l'immonde*. Domain of vice, filth, abjection, and moral solitude, of the travesty of all bourgeois values, the closed world of *l'immonde* evolves into theater, as is evident in the progress from *Haute Surveillance* to *Le Balcon*. Prisons, monasteries, brothels, and theaters all resemble each other in that they are "severe" places enforcing a kind of asceticism and a special discipline that differentiates their inhabitants from those on the outside. They offer death and rebirth, or reconstruction, into an antiworld: they impose values that contradict our values; they are the other sides of our mirrors, grotesque travesties (as opposed to metaphors) that nonetheless reveal to us the existence of certain parallel structural relations (e.g., power/humiliation) within our own world. As a setting for ritual sacrifice (*Haute Surveillance*, *Les Bonnes*) prison recapitulates the theatricality of the mass. As the site of absolute evil and of timelessness, prison is the place where real acts are impossible, and thus where actions transform themselves into gestures, games, rites. The devil, it is said in *Le Balcon*, is a great actor. Prison, then, working its transforming magic on abjection and evil, permits the production of theater.

It is for this reason that Genet as artist cannot ever totally relinquish the "powers of prison." Yet Genet the man has shown other concerns, and other attitudes toward imprisonment, since the production of *Les Paravents*. Is it because his political attitudes no longer allow him to create a character like Saïd, singing from his

cell the beauty of evil and abjection, that Genet has stopped writing "literature" or "theater"? In his preface to the letters of George Jackson, Genet makes passing reference to prison as evil.

> It might be supposed that as the site of absolute malediction, prison, and at its heart the cell, would enforce by its misery . . . a kind of solidarity.[24]

Prison, however, he adds (as we already knew from *Journal d'un voleur*) serves no such purpose. Although he praises Jackson's letters, of a special quality and power because written from prison, he is aware that a real victory can no longer be purely verbal. Blacks must "denounce the curse of being black and captive"; in order to organize they must first get *out*. In a 1975 interview with Angela Davis, Genet continued to show interest in the liberation of black and other minority prisoners in the United States: Bobby Seale, two Native Americans condemned at the time of the Attica revolt, Joann Little, the Wilmington Ten.[25] As in his literary works, it is still the prisoners of society that attract Genet, but no longer primarily for their "poetic" qualities. In a conflict somewhat analogous to that of his illustrious biographer, Genet the poet sings the beauty of sequestration while Genet the activist speaks for liberation.

Epilogue

Genet's perspective on prison both as an experiential and as a literary phenomenon comes from a viewpoint that opposes not only bourgeois society but also his contemporary writers, the philosophers of liberty. The inmate's glorification of prison does not permit that structure's metaphorical transposition into "the human condition," indeed *l'immonde* is more accurately the inhuman condition. Yet certain existential themes—the portrayal of power and humiliation, of fundamental solitude and failed solidarity, of the acceptance of prison as given, and the search for liberation from within—articulate Genet's literary prisons with those of Malraux, Camus, and Sartre. What differentiates them is of course the inverted system of values: the "saintliness" ascribed to abjection and moral solitude, the utter rejection of "your world" and the myth of Guiana as earthly paradise, the lack of resistance to society's power to imprison, indeed the demand for severity. Genet carries on in his mode the modern elaboration of the historical prison *topos*. Rejection of the world and the pursuit of liberation within severe enclosure, valorization of the "sweet" cell as instigator of spiritual life and of poetry and love, initiatory death and resurrection, the transformation of linear time into cyclical time or eternity are the traditional themes that he develops from his particular vantage point.

It would seem that one could separate Genet from his politically engaged contemporaries by the values each ascribes to the phenomenon of imprisonment. Thus the life prisoner turns inward to seek liberation at the antipodes of "your world" while the sometime prisoners of wartime circumstances combat the forces of oppression, seeking to liberate themselves and their fellows from

"encagement." Yet the texts present a much more complex picture. Readers of Genet do not receive only an impression of the poetry of prison; they simultaneously become aware of its brutalities and its role as a perpetrator of social injustice. When Genet tells us that the concentration camps are a logical outgrowth of the French penal system or that the imprisonment of American blacks and other oppressed people is merely a form of their actual social situation, he is engaging in a kind of Foucaultian analysis of the relationship between modern society and enclosure. What Genet hesitates to offer is a solution, or a mode of resistance, partially because he sees that (as in the Algerian war) revolutionaries forming new societies will become themselves wielders of power, thus incarcerators, partially because of the continued pull of the poetic "powers" of prison.

On the other hand, Malraux, Camus, and Sartre, passionate devotees of liberty, all reveal in their own modes a fascination with the poetry of prison. Self-proclaimed prophet of *l'univers concentrationnaire*, active resistant to evil and the absurd in their metaphysical and social forms, Malraux of the three nonetheless comes closest to a religious understanding of imprisonment. He accepts the paradoxical nature of Pascal's prison, both as an authentic image of the human condition and as prerequisite to a form of salvation. Perken, Kyo, Katow, Kassner, and Berger all experience the eternalization of time, the death and rebirth, and the spiritual illumination or transcendent joy that characterize both archaic initiation and what might be called Christian cellular lyricism. While proclaiming the message of collective solidarity in our inevitable common prison, Malraux's texts at the same time valorize a poetic, cellular singularity.

Like Malraux, Camus assumes metaphysical and social imprisonment as a given. The search for liberation leads on the one hand to solidarity and revolt but on the other to cellular retreat and meditation. *Dénuement*, the experience of absurdity and mortality in their barest forms, is best experienced in the Pascalian hotel room or the cell on death row. Although not endowed with the transcendent, quasi-religious qualities of Malraux's, Camus's cellular spaces also instigate familiar transformations: the substitution of cyclical for linear time, symbolic death and rebirth, an opening onto nature, or a poetic discovery of "the benign indifference of the world." For Camus it is the manner in which cel-

lular lyricism coexists with a perception of imprisonment as the common human condition that is all-important. Meursault, Kaliayev, Janine, and the major characters of *La Peste* are apprenticed in their individual cells or their collective confinement to revolt; Caligula, Martha, and Jean-Baptiste Clamence ally themselves with the forces that imprison rather than with the prisoners in an ironic reversal of cellular lyricism. It is perhaps the latter vision that emerges as most characteristic. Are the children of the half-century who have witnessed the most brutal imprisonments in history capable of sleeping on the floor of the cell for each other, or are they condemned either to collaboration with totalitarian collective closed worlds and/or to a perpetual individual "little-ease" of guilt?

Sartre, who claimed to have learned what liberty was behind barbed wire and to have been "never so free" as under the German Occupation, also begins with the premise of collective imprisonment as our common historical lot, the situation from which we are condemned to invent an exit. Inherently theatrical, the Sartrian representation of encagement creates a dynamism of enclosures, openings, and re-enclosures that lead Orestes in and out of Argos, Brunet and Mathieu in and out of their stalag, and Frantz, with less assurance, in and out of his own closed world. Sartre's collective textual prisons seem to be engendered by two models, corresponding to his double-edged experience of confinement in the stalag. On the one hand, as in *Bariona* and *Les Chemins de la liberté*, prisoners may discover solidarity and community through the opposition of *our* resistance to *their* power; on the other hand they may make the more insidious discovery that others are unalterably Other and that *their* power manifests itself in *us*, as in the internalized concentrationary worlds of *Huis clos* and *Les Séquestrés d'Altona*.

An ambivalent value-system manifests itself as well in the representation of individual cellular types of spaces in Sartre's fiction and drama. Retreats in some instances for subjectivism and inauthenticity, they may in others function as vehicles of liberation, somewhat in the manner of the early Christian perception that, if the world is a prison and impediment to knowledge, liberation and truth are to be sought in solitary confinement. The cellular rooms of Sartre's "madmen," Pierre and Frantz, reveal in a distorted way realities that the *salauds* who walk in the sun or

direct enterprises wish to keep repressed. Roquentin's room and Mathieu's room, potential refuges from temporal life, also function as spaces of revelation and confrontation, death and rebirth, Pascalian in the manner of Camus's hotel rooms. Brunet, the man of collectivity and linear time, undergoes in a cellular space an initiation into subjectivity and circular, eternal time. The objects of Sartre's critical studies—Tintoretto, Baudelaire, Genet, and Flaubert—produce their art because of their sequestration. As in the case of Malraux's revolutionary propaganda or his appeals to virile fraternity, Camus's apologetics for revolt and collective action, Sartre's existentialist and later Marxist ethics of freedom are often undermined by a sense of the pervasiveness of individual, cellular enclosure as well as an attraction to the cell.

The paradoxical literary imprisonments of the existentialist literary generation are symptomatic of a dichotomy between what might be called the political and the subjective aspects of the modern prison *topos*. The era of the "age of reclusions" seared the European consciousness with an awareness of its society's power to control and humiliate, of systematic and methodical destruction and submission, but also of individual and collective powers of resistance. We have witnessed on the one hand the growth of a special literature of the Holocaust, still searching for an ideal form reconciling an abstraction of total horror with historical or individual anecdote. On the other hand, we have seen that modern writers not of the Holocaust have reflected the *univers concentrationnaire* as one extraordinary but not unrelated facet of the pervasiveness of imprisonment in contemporary society.

If incarcerations on the massive scale of the Second World War are no longer with us, we have the gulag in the East and an ever more sophisticated system of surveillance and punishment in the West. The political nature of both, or the extent to which they epitomize the structure of their societies, continues to be a matter of debate. Solzhenitsyn has argued majestically that the Soviet gulag is the inevitable result of the Soviet system. Vaclav Havel, a Czechoslovakian playwright and activist who has spent about four years in prison, cites the relationship succinctly:

> In short, prison seems to me to be totalitarianism's test tube for the future. All the hidden, insidious, rotten, devious means by which a government aims to manipulate and control the

> human being are there visible to the naked eye. Outside, one cannot see them quite so clearly. But in prison they have been developed to a perfection which for the moment our government can only dream of in relation to the outside world.[1]

Thus, prison appears as a concentration, a *mise-en-abîme*, of what Cayrol, Ionesco, and others called, in a Western context, a "quotidien concentrationnaire."

For Foucault, the prisons of Western societies are as politically symptomatic as the more overtly political prisons elsewhere in the world. Our form of the gulag, as it were, is a network of incarcerating structures that include schools, hospitals, the military, and industrial hierarchies. Incarceration is the "omnipresent armature" of Jeremy Bentham's dream come true on a massive scale: a "panoptic society."[2] The writings as well as the *causes célèbres* of the criminal prisoners Roger Knobelspeiss in France and Jack Abbott in the United States brought Foucault's contentions to the forefront of debate in a specific context. Abbott's collection of fiercely written letters to Norman Mailer not only confronts its "free" readers with the horror of prison existence and the hopelessness of prison "reform," but also at least raises the possibility that the violence between guard and prisoner, oppressor and oppressed, the distrust and lack of community among prisoners, the utter isolation of the "hole," are but exaggerated cases of a sickness latent in the entire society. "*In the Belly of the Beast* leaves no doubt where our gulag is," responded one reader.[3]

The fact that Abbott, liberated through the good offices of the New York literary establishment, committed murder and was returned to jail, and that Knobelspeiss followed a similar pattern, committing armed robbery, raises the question of the legitimacy of literary talent as a justification for nonincarceration, and the inevitable parallel with Genet. Whatever the superficial parallels, however, the cases of Abbott and Genet, as well as their writing, raise very different issues. Like Genet, Abbott did in a sense write himself out of prison, but the exit he invented, to adopt Sartre's term, is exactly opposite to the one invented by Genet. Although Abbott, like Genet, perceived prison as absolute evil, his stance was not to submit to and glorify its poetry, but to confront institutional violence with (presumably legitimate) personal violence, in accord with the macho code of his patron. Abbott's violent be-

havior once outside the walls really should not have surprised those who read his book carefully. He there portrays himself as a creature formed from youth by the prison, so conditioned by its cycles of violence as to remain almost without personal will. Writing was a means of transcending, or at least of channeling the violence, but it would have nothing to do with a personal behavior he viewed as programmed. Genet, on the other hand, deciding to will the evil perpetrated by prison, submits and entices the reader into its power at a level beyond violence.

If the "political" aspect of the modern prison dichotomy tends to view prison as a microcosm of society, the other side of the coin, the subjective, tends to retain a sense of anguishing but at times salutary isolation, a form of "cellular lyricism." Certain modernist and postmodernist texts manifest something of the medieval paradox that views enclosure in the individual cell as a means of liberation from the prison-world. Kafka's rooms, cages, and cells, Proust's cork-lined room, Ionesco's, Robbe-Grillet's, and Beckett's cellular rooms, Butor's train, Calvino's inn, Borges's labyrinths, Walker Percy's hospital rooms, are, to be sure, places in which the self turns inward to discover its isolation and even the hopelessness of its situation, but also spaces that permit the generation of a text, thus a form of retaliation or at least, as Beckett would say, "going on."

The modern form of fascination with imprisonment, cellular and collective, is related to modern literature's continued tendency toward spatiality. The text generated from the discovery or rediscovery of an enclosed space cannot proceed diachronically, but must compose itself synchronically, superimposing layers of time or abolishing time altogether. This phenomenon may be seen in three very different recent French novels, one manifestly political in content, the other two manifestly not.

Jorge Semprun's *Quel beau dimanche!* (*What a Beautiful Sunday!*) (1980) represents an attempt to deal with the *univers concentrationnaire* almost forty years after. In a sense rewriting his *Le Grand Voyage* from his present perspective as a former Communist, Semprun frames his narrative (on the model of *Ivan Denisovitch*) in his recollection of a single day in Buchenwald in 1944, but superimposes on this, as a palimpsest, experiences extending back to the Spanish civil war and forward until the moment of writing. The rediscovery of Buchenwald gradually gener-

ates the revelation that the concentration camp system was not, as he had once thought, a quintessence of capitalist society, but rather the epitome of Stalinist bureaucracy. Reaching more or less the same conclusion that Camus did in *L'Homme révolté*, Semprun creates a spatial narrative that is political as well as autobiographical, where the gulag gradually imposes itself on the Nazi camp system so that both appear as the inevitable result of a common totalitarian impulse. Following Hegel's definition of *Gefängniswesen* in terms that seem to echo Foucault's, Semprun formulates what he considers the essence of the Nazi and the Soviet system: "Work and correction, reeducation by forced labor."[4] The closed world of Buchenwald is reevoked in its uniqueness but also incorporates, spatially rather than temporally, the historical incarcerations of the entire twentieth century.

The technique of spatialization through evocation of place is evident in the novels of Robbe-Grillet, where decor engulfs traditional plot and character, and minute description suspends narrative time. One recent example replaces topography with topology, the description of place with unfolding of place, the text as product with the text as process of generation. *Topologie d'une cité fantôme* (*Topology of a Phantom City*, 1976) is divided into five "spaces," the first part of the first of which is entitled, "Dans la cellule génératrice." The narrator poses as a kind of archaeologist, someone seeking to uncover something like a prison.[5] In the depths of the narrator's erotic fantasy, the prison he describes comes to enclose several layers of time, from the mythical citadel of Vanadium where sacrificial virgins were enclosed to a reformatory for teenage prostitutes. Familiar prison themes recur, topologically distorted: fantasies of power and humiliation, the Alice-in-Wonderland role of the mirror, the cessation as well as the superimposition of time, the lyrical dream of escape, the prison as refuge, the prison as setting for ritual or theater. Robbe-Grillet would seem almost to have transposed certain themes from Genet.

An even more restricting decor dominates Beckett's *Le Dépeupleur* (*The Lost Ones*, 1970). The fifty-five pages of description of an apparently sealed cylinder and the "bodies" within it searching for mythical exits force the reader toward a simultaneous perception of eternal activities where time exists only as an "unthinkable" past and an "unthinkable" future when all activity within the cylinder will cease. Yet Beckett's spatialized synchronic

text is not merely autoreferential; it also signifies, or refers, not to a real cylinder or even a possibly real cylinder in the reader's experience, but to a literary tradition of collective prisons. Beckett opens his text to Dante with references to "the sun and the other stars" beyond the cylinder and to his perennial favorite Belaqua. The cylinder resembles purgatory because its inhabitants climb and have not (all, yet) abandoned hope, but their movement in concentric circles and failure to alter their situation draw their world closer to that of "the eternal prison." Their limited vision and their busy, comic activities (effects achieved through the reader's God-like viewpoint) recall too the shadow-watching in Plato's cave or *divertissement* in Pascal's cell.

The spatialized postmodern text adapts itself well to the traditional *topos*, both in its collective and its cellular forms. Restriction of space produces eternalization of time. This type of spatialization can be seen already in the writers of a generation that claimed to be engaged in history. What differentiates that generation from ours, perhaps, is the clarity with which a real and brutal existential and historical encagement then seemed to indicate a road to freedom.

Notes

Introduction

1 "Engagement," in *Noten zur Literatur*, 3:125–27. Cited by Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi in *By Words Alone: The Holocaust in Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

2 "In Extremis," *Cambridge Review* 7 (February 1969). Steiner castigates Sylvia Plath for "using" imagery from the Holocaust to illustrate her personal dilemmas. On the other hand, a poet like Nelly Sachs who lived through the events has the "right" to use such imagery. See also Brian Murdoch, "Transformations of the Holocaust: Auschwitz in Modern Lyric Poetry," *Comparative Literature Studies* 11, no. 2 (June 1974), pp. 123–50.

3 "The Literature of the Holocaust," in *Beyond All This Fiddle* (New York, 1968), p. 32.

4 See Ezrahi, *By Words Alone;* Lawrence L. Langer, *The Holocaust and the Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975) and his *Versions of Survival: The Holocaust and the Human Spirit* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982); Alvin H. Rosenfeld, *A Double Dying: Reflections on Holocaust Literature* (Bloomington, Ind.: University of Indiana Press, 1980); and Marcel Tetel, "Whither the Holocaust?" *Contemporary French Civilization* 6 (Fall and Winter 1981–82), pp. 219–35.

5 Mircea Eliade, *Myths and Symbols of Initiation* (New York, 1958), p. 58.

6 Eliade, *Myth and Reality* (New York, 1963), p. 46.

7 *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison* (Paris, 1975), p. 242.

8 *The Psychology of the Unconscious* (New York, 1916), p. 331.

9 *Archetypal Patterns in Poetry* (London, 1965), pp. 122–36.

10 Boethius, *Philosophiae consolationis*, ed. H. F. Stewart and E. K. Rand (Cambridge, Mass., 1968), bk. 5. prose 2, p. 372.

11 See Pierre Courcelle, "Tradition platonicienne et traditions chrétiennes du corps-prison," *Revue des études latines* 43 (1965), pp. 406–43; and "L'Ame en cage," *Parusia: Studien zur Philosophie Platons und zur Problemgeschichte des Platonismus* (Frankfurt am Main, 1965), pp. 103–16.

12 In *Oratio* 30, cited by Courcelle, "Corps-prison," p. 407.

13 *Ad martyras*, ed. Quacquarelli (Rome: Desclée, 1963), p. 70. Cited by Courcelle, "Corps-prison," p. 419. The lines I have translated are: "Si enim recogitemus ipsum magis mundum carcerem esse, exisse vos e carcere quam in carcerem introisse intelligemus. . . . Christianus etiam extra carcerem saeculo renuntiauit, in carcere autem etiam carceri. . . . Etsi corpus includitur, etsi caro detinetur, omnia spiritui patent."

14 See Louis Gougaud's article "Cellule" in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* (Paris, 1953), 2:398.

15 Letter 115 in *Letters of Abelard and Heloise*, ed. and trans. Betty Radice (Baltimore: Penguin, 1974), pp. 280–81.

16 Thomas More, *A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation*, ed. Leland Miles (Bloomington, Ind., 1965), p. 209. (Part 3, chaps. 19–21 are devoted to the prison theme.)

17 Letter of Pascal to his sister, April 1, 1648, in *Pensées et opuscules* (Hachette, 1909), p. 89. Cited and translated by Brombert, *The Romantic Prison* (Princeton, N.J., 1978), p. 28. Brombert also points out the rapprochement between Thomas More's use of the prison-world figure (with the idea that all are sentenced to die) and Pascal's.

18 W. B. Carnochan, in *Confinement and Flight: An Essay on English Literature of the Eighteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), chap. 3, examines *Moll Flanders* as an example of a "happy prison" and Pope's *Eloisa to Abelard* as an example of terrifying, unresolved confinement.

19 See my doctoral dissertation, "Prison Imagery in the Works of Kafka and Camus" (Harvard University, 1968).

20 *The Gulag Archipelago* (New York, 1974), pt. 1, chap. 5, p. 181.

21 *Contre Sainte-Beuve*, cited by Poulet, *L'Espace proustien* (Paris, 1963), p. 135.

22 *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven, 1979), pp. 83–84. Frederick Karl, in "Enclosure, the Adversary Culture, and the Nature of the Novel," *Mosaic* 7, no. 3 (Spring 1974), p. 9, also argues that the denial of worldly life to Victorian women encouraged a literature of inversion and inwardness.

23 *A Rebours* (Paris, 1955), p. 259.

24 Arthur Koestler, "Dialogue with Death," in *Spanish Testament* (London, 1937), p. 292.

25 "Spatial Form in Modern Literature," reprinted in *Widening Gyre* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1963), p. 9.

26 In an article published in *Critical Inquiry* in 1977, Frank updated his concept of spatial form in the light of intervening structuralist and semiotic criticism. Of special interest to him are Genette's theories of narration in "Frontières du récit," *Figures II*, and throughout *Figures III*. See *Spatial Form in Narrative*, ed. Jeffrey R. Smitten and Ann Daghistany (Ithaca, N.Y., 1981), pp. 202–43.

27 *Figures II* (Paris, 1969), pp. 43–48. See also Michael Issacharoff,

"Qu'est-ce que l'espace littéraire?" *L'Information littéraire* (May–June 1978).

28 Genette develops this notion to some extent in "Frontières du récit." Jerome Klinkowitz, in "The Novel as Artifact: Spatial Form in Contemporary Fiction," *Spatial Form in Narrative*, pp. 37–47, maintains that insistence on setting over action is the key ingredient in spatial form fiction. Ricardo Gullón, in "On Space in the Novel," *Critical Inquiry* 2, no. 1 (Autumn 1975), pp. 11–28, also suggests that "literary" and "geographic" space are interrelated, although his reasons for thinking so seem rather vague. He does make a useful remark that literary space is "not a reflection of anything but an invention of the invention which is the narrator, whose perceptions (transferred to images) engender it" (p. 12). Roman Ingarden's earlier distinction between *dargestellter Raum* (represented space) and *Vorstellungsraum* (imagined space) with his reminder that space in literature is a construction of language never coinciding with real space (if a writer chooses to represent a room he does not necessarily let us know what is outside of it) is also helpful. See *The Literary Work of Art*, trans. George G. Grabowicz (Evanston, Ill., 1973), pp. 222–33. "Geographical space," despite Genette's contention in "L'Espace littéraire," is never wholly referential!

29 *L'Espace humain* (Paris, 1962), p. 181.

30 In the now classic "Introduction à l'analyse structurale des récits," first published in *Communications* 8 (1966), Barthes calls *fonctions* those units of a narrative that have a role in furthering the action. An *indice* on the other hand refers to a concept rather than to an immediate act; it may be a detail that tells the reader something about the hero's character. Thus the former is metonymical and the latter metaphorical. Barthes does not apply these terms specifically to space or decor.

31 See Boris Tomashevsky, "Thematics," in *Russian Formalist Criticism*, ed. Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis (Lincoln, Nebr., 1965), p. 68.

32 "Confinement in *Die Verwandlung* and *Les Séquestrés d'Altona*," *Comparative Literature* (Winter 1970), pp. 32–44.

1 An Age of Reclusions

1 "No age, more than our own, will have been an age of reclusions." Gabriel Audisio, Introduction to *Ecrivains en prison* (Paris: Seghers, 1945), p. 7.

2 *Histoire de la captivité des français en Allemagne* (Paris: Gallimard, 1967).

3 See Michel Borwicz, *Ecrits des condamnés à mort sous l'occupation allemande* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1954), chaps. on Fresnes and other prisons.

4 Cayrol produced to my mind the most sensitive visual interpretation of the concentration camp universe in his film (with Alain Resnais) *Night*

and Fog. In 1978 French television had the good sense to show this film along with, and in obvious contrast to, the inanities of *Holocaust.*

5 See, for example, Jacqueline Farge, "Un Chant s'envole": "to feel yourself there, passive, your heart filled with hatred, / and not to be able to do anything to help." In Pierre Seghers, ed., *La Résistance et ses poétes (France 1940/1945)* (Paris: Seghers, 1974), p. 493.

6 "These days of prison are like a mouldy time." Jean Wahl, "Poèmes de circonstance," in Seghers, *Résistance*, p. 648.

7 Gabriel Audisio, *Feuilles de Fresnes* (Editions de Minuit, 1945), p. 16.

8 "Poètes de la Résistance," in *Poésie '39–'45,* ed. Pierre Seghers, p. 6.

9 "Before the immense rot / Of prisons and charnel-houses / Stands the brief pure flame / Of justice / O mouth-flower of the prisoner." Luc Decaunes, "La Réponse," in Seghers, *Résistance*, p. 459.

10 "Un grand défi lancé aux conditions du mépris." Jean Cassou (pseudonym Jean Noir), *33 Sonnets composés au secret, présentés par François "La Colère"* (Editions de Minuit, 1944), p. 8.

11 Aragon, "Richard-Coeur-de-Lion," in *Les Yeux d'Elsa* (Neuchâtel, 1942), p. 74.

12 Audisio, *Feuilles de Fresnes,* p. 95.

13 See, for example, R. P. Brückberger's "La Marseillaise de Clarivaux," *La Patrie se fait tous les jours*, pp. 387–92, in which Joan in prison comes to embody the solidarity of all French prisoners.

14 "Oh despair, or wild hope / Of those who died before me . . . / I feel they are still there / Around me, looking at me." *Résistance*, p. 598.

15 "Ce n'est pas à gratter sans fin l'individu qu'on finit par rencontrer l'homme." Audisio, *Feuilles de Fresnes,* p. 55.

16 Ibid., p. 61.

17 *Les Prisons de l'épuration* (Paris, 1947), pp. 34ff.

18 "Les Noms sur les murs," in *Poèmes de Fresnes* (Paris: Les Sept Couleurs, 1949), p. 24.

19 Guy Tassigny, *Le Paquebot des jours perdus*, ed. OCIA (Paris, 1945).

20 "Psaume III," in *Poèmes de Fresnes*, p. 19.

21 Stanislas Fumet in "Fresnes ou la corde raide," *Les Ecrivains en Prison,* ed. Gabriel Audisio (Paris: Seghers, 1945), pp. 150–57. He continues, "Pascal would have found his paradise in one of those cages with only a little sky on one's head."

22 Sonnet II, in *33 Sonnets*, p. 48.

23 Sonnet III, ibid., p. 49.

24 Jean Guéhenno [pseud. Cévennes], in *Dans la prison* (Paris, 1944), p. 38.

25 Ibid., p. 39.

26 "Mon pays," in *La Patrie se fait tous les jours*, p. 184.

27 "1940," in ibid., p. 286.

28 "Résurrection de la France," in ibid., p. 145.

29 "Literature and Art in Occupied Paris," *The Listener* 34, no. 882 (6 Dec. 1945), p. 664.

30 "But how could we grow accustomed to ignominy? . . . Our masters seemed to be spreading its plague, as certain animals spread diseases from which they are not suffering themselves." "Lauter" (pseud.), "Les

Puits des miracles," in *Chroniques interdites* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1943–44), 2:72.

31 "Forez," *Le Cahier noir* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1943), p. 18.

32 *Dans la prison*, p. 26.

33 *Situations III* (Paris: Gallimard, 1949), p. 11.

34 Ibid., p. 29.

35 *Les Grandes Vacances, 1935–45* (Paris, 1951), p. 15.

36 "Le Théâtre de A jusqu'à Z," interview by Paul-Louis Mignon, *L'Avant-Scène Théâtre*, nos. 402–3 (1–15 May 1968), p. 34.

37 "Les Peintures de Giacometti," *Situations IV* (Paris, 1964), p. 348.

38 "Réflexions d'un prisonnier," in *Journal d'un homme occupé* (Paris: Les Sept Couleurs, 1955), p. 139.

39 Preface, *L'Espèce humaine* (Paris: Editions Cité Universelle, 1947).

40 Jean Cayrol, "Pour un romanesque lazaréen," in *Les Corps étrangers* (Paris: Seuil, 1964), p. 225.

41 See Maja Goth, *Franz Kafka et les lettres françaises (1928–1955)* and my "Kafka et Camus," in *La Revue des lettres modernes* (1971), pp. 71–86.

42 David Rousset, *L'Univers concentrationnaire* (Paris, 1946), pp. 185, 99.

43 Cayrol, "Pour un romanesque lazaréen," pp. 76–77, 92–93.

44 Michel Méri, *Histoires d'un autre monde, les camps de la mort* (Toulouse: Editions La Victoire, 1944), p. 9.

45 André Malraux, *Antimémoires* (Paris, 1967), p. 569.

46 Borowicz, *Ecrits des condamnés à mort*, chap. 14, especially sections on "Le Passé" and "L'Avenir."

47 See, for example, in *Les Vivants: Cahiers publiés par des prisonniers et déportés* (Paris: Boivin, 1945), the testimonies of Pierre Mattias, Jean Debrix, Pierre Morel-Melbourne. The theme is also central to Jean Cayrol's concept of Lazarus.

48 See Jean Cayrol, "Les Rêves concentrationnaires," in *Lazare parmi nous* (Paris: Seuil, 1950), pp. 39–61.

49 Jules Lorquin, for example, in his *témoignage* "Confessions d'un revenant," confesses to a longing for freedom from ordinary life as experienced in captivity.

50 "Journal terrible" in *L'Aveu* (Paris: Editions du Sagittaire, 1946), p. 143.

51 Malraux, *Antimémoires*, pp. 585, 587.

52 Ibid., p. 587.

53 *Les Vivants*, p. 76.

54 Antelme, *L'Espèce humaine*, esp. pp. 59ff.

55 Borowicz, *Ecrits des condamnés à mort*, p. 57.

56 This interpretation obviously encountered some difficulties when the Soviet camp system was revealed. David Rousset, who headed a commission made up of former inmates of Nazi camps to investigate camps in the USSR (*Commission internationale contre le régime concentrationnaire*), attempted an explanation. The fact that a camp system existed in the Soviet Union, and in China, necessarily means that these two states are *not* socialist "at least if one accords to this term the sense which socialists in general and Marxists in particular have always given

it." "Le Sens de notre combat," preface to Paul Barton, *L'Institution concentrationnaire en Russie 1930–1957* (Paris: Plon, 1959), p. 13.

57 Antelme, L'*Espèce humaine*, p. 327.

58 *Journal en miettes* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1967), p. 156. Ionesco also observes here that Kafka already had described the concentration camps. In a review of Sorana Gurian's *Récit d'un combat* in *NRF* (1 July 1956), pp. 143–44, he elaborates:

> Reading the works of Rousset on the society of the concentration camp, we were able to have the revelation that the author was not describing an exceptionally monstrous society; we had seen there the image, in a sense the "quintessence" of the social and infernal world in which we have been immersed forever, daily; the odiously real, nightmare society (already revealed by Kafka), our true society, dominated by fear, by the most cruelly perfect egotism engendered by fear, by the absurd thirst for power, the world of the pitiless struggle for life which does not merit that struggle which we strive, nevertheless, to carry on.

59 Personal interview with Cayrol, July 1974. See also Roland Barthes's "La Rature," in Jean Cayrol, *Les Corps étrangers*, p. 245.

60 *L'Aveu*, p. 19.

61 Ibid., p. 125.

2 Absurdity and Transcendence

1 See "Interview avec André Malraux," *Fontaine* 42 (1945), pp. 320–23, cited in Samuel E. Stokes, Jr., "Pascal and Malraux," *Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature* 6, no. 3, p. 286. See also Henri Peyre, "The Nostalgia of Transcendence," *Twentieth Century Literature* 24, no. 3, André Malraux issue (Fall 1978), pp. 431–42, for a survey of the influence of Pascal on Malraux.

2 Malraux, *Antimémoires* (Paris, 1967), p. 570.

3 Once in Indochina in 1924, under house arrest; in 1940 in a prison camp near Sens; and in 1944 in a camp near Toulouse.

4 Malraux refers to these books and their authors both in *Les Noyers d'Altenburg* and in the *Antimémoires* as the great stories of the "reconquest of the world." A participant at the colloquy at Altenburg, Shirard, recounts that an imprisoned friend told him that only these three books could withstand the prison atmosphere.

5 Albert Sonnenfeld, "Malraux and the Tyranny of Time: The Circle and the Gesture," *Romanic Review* 54, no. 3 (1963), p. 200, suggests that the name Grabot is (like Godot) a bilingual combination of the German *Grab* and the French diminuitive. Thus "Grabot's very name foreshadows disaster and degradation."

6 W. M. Frohock has demonstrated how Malraux's "poetry" transforms apparent defeats into triumphs. See *André Malraux and the Tragic*

Imagination (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1952), especially pp. 58–90, for his analysis of *La Condition humaine*.

7 According to Jenkins, Renn was at this time imprisoned for "literary high treason" and Malraux characterized him in a 1935 speech as an intellectual who wanted to defend the ideas of "dignity" and "virile fraternity." *André Malraux*, Twayne's World Authors Series (New York, 1972), p. 83.

8 Payne mentions that German Communists escaping from Hitler's Germany, Regler among them, would come to Malraux's apartment from 1933 on. He finds the physical description and political background of Kassner reminiscent of Regler. *A Portrait of André Malraux* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1970), pp. 181, 220.

9 See, for example, Denis Boak, *André Malraux* (Oxford, 1968), p. 102.

10 Bredel's *Die Prüfung* (which is subtitled a "novel from a concentration camp," but which claims to be an accurate record of the author's and his comrades' experiences) was published in London in 1935 and translated into French the following year. The similarities may be explained simply by the fact that the testimonies that Malraux heard resembled those of Bredel.

11 The radical transformation or cessation of time sense is as we have seen a commonplace in prison literature. The circular prison and the use of the circle as symbol are, as Sonnenfeld points out in the article cited in n. 5 above, frequent in Malraux's work. The circle is of course an ancient emblem of time. Malraux's circle images, Sonnenfeld states, often "like the circle in Vishnu's hand, represent the endless cyclical movement of the universe, the inexorable orbit of time which enslaves, degrades and eventually annihilates man" (p. 199). It is Sonnenfeld's contention that the typical Malraux hero accomplishes a "linear" gesture of communication with a collective fraternity or a successor and thus succeeds in breaking out of his circular prison of solitude and fatality. While this is a perceptive evaluation of many situations in Malraux's fiction, it fails to take into account the opposite, paradoxical effect of the circular prison: its liberating quality. Renewal and rebirth traditionally have been associated with the symbol of the circle. This fact does not make Malraux's use of the circle ironic, as Sonnenfeld argues, for Malraux's prisoners discover their own way of rebirth within their closed circles.

12 In this description of the discovery of a link between the self and the infinite as it takes place in a prison cell, one is also reminded of Rubashov's intuition of the "grammatical fiction" and the "oceanic feeling" at the end of *Darkness at Noon*.

13 *André Malraux* (London, 1960), p. 53.

14 "Venedig," in Friedrich Nietzsche, *Gözendämmerung, Der Antichrist, Ecce homo, Gedichte* (Stuttgart, 1964), p. 481.

15 "Le P'tit Quinquin" reappears in the last section of the *Antimémoires*, devoted to concentration camps. The same juxtaposition is treated: a group of inmates sings, an intellectual recites *Macbeth* (*Antimémoires*, p. 577).

16 Mircea Eliade, *Naissances mystiques, essai sur quelques types d'initiation* (Paris, 1959), cites several instances of rites in which the symbolic burial place of the initiate is seen also as a womb out of which the initiate is reborn.

17 See Mircea Eliade, *Le Chamanisme et les techniques archaiques de l'extase* (Paris, 1951), pp. 244–46. Leo Frobenius, *Kulturgeschichte Afrikas* (Frankfurt, 1933), p. 188, also describes the ceremony of the shaman climbing the world tree.

18 Frobenius, *Kulturgeschichte Afrikas*, p. 296. Frohock, *André Malraux*, p. 148, affirms that Malraux did read Frobenius and discusses the shamanism of Malraux's heroes manifested in a pattern of withdrawal-enlightenment-return. Following Claude-Edmonde Magny, most Malraux critics see Frobenius as the model for Möllberg.

19 Eliade, *Naissances mystiques*, p. 216. English translation, slightly modified, from *Rites and Symbols of Initiation: The Mysteries of Birth and Rebirth*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 102.

20 Eliade, *Naissances mystiques*, p. 84.

3 Sunlit Cells and Closed Worlds

1 See Jean du Rostu, "Un Pascal sans Christ, Albert Camus," *Etudes*, (November 1945), p. 175.

2 "Pour un romanesque lazaréen," in *Les Corps étrangers* (Paris, 1964).

3 "Logique de la limite, esthétique de la pauvreté: Théorie de l'essai," in *Albert Camus 1980*, ed. R. Gay-Crosier (Gainesville, Fla., 1980).

4 "Paris is an admirable cave, and its men, seeing their own shadows moving on the back wall, take them for the only reality." "L'Eté," in *Essais*, p. 866.

5 Georges Pomet, "La Structure de l'espace dans *L'Etranger*," *Etudes françaises* 7, no. 4 (Nov. 1971), p. 361, notes, "Open space corresponds to moments of crisis, since the rest of the story takes place in a closed space."

6 *La Mer et les prisons* (Paris, 1956), p. 10.

7 The prison cell with a view restricted to the sky was originally designed for a specific purpose. Henri Martineau compares Fabrice's imprisonment to that of political prisoners contemporary with Stendhal, in particular Silvio Pellico. He makes the following remark on Alexandre Andryane's memoirs: "Andryane reports . . . that in Spielberg they had a wall put up so that the prisoners would no longer have the consolation of gazing at the landscape and, seeing nothing but the sky, would think only of it in the interest of their soul" (Notes to *La Chartreuse de Parme*, Garnier ed., pp. 634–44).

8 The fact that the walls are made of *stone* gives another symbolic link, both with Meursault's earlier life and with stone imagery elsewhere in Camus. See Paul Fortier, *Une Lecture de Camus: La valeur des éléments descriptifs dans l'oeuvre romanesque* (Paris, 1977), pp. 90–92.

9 Compare Meursault's "happiness" at the end of the novel with that of Julien Sorel: "It is strange that I have only learned the art of enjoying life since I have seen its end so near." Stendhal, *Romans* (Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1952), p. 667.

10 Jean Anouilh, *Antigone* (Paris, 1946), pp. 55–56.

11 In the preface written for the American edition of his theater (*Caligula and Three Other Plays* [New York, 1958]), Camus tells his readers they should "consider *Le Malentendu* as an attempt to create a modern tragedy." *Théâtre, récits, nouvelles,* p. 1729.

12 *Théâtre, récits, nouvelles,* p. 1728.

13 Preface to 1958 edition of "L'Envers et l'endroit," *Essais,* p. 7.

14 "L'Envers et l'endroit," *Essais,* pp. 38–39.

15 Kafka wrote to Milena, "We are both married, you with your husband. I with my anguish in Prague." *Briefe an Milena* (New York, 1952), p. 113. Camus analyzes his "closed worlds" in his essay on Kafka that follows *Le Mythe de Sisyphe.* See my "Kafka et Camus," *La Revue des Lettres modernes* 4 (1971), pp. 71–86.

16 See Reino Virtanen, "Camus' *Malentendu* and Some Analogies," *Comparative Literature* 10, 3 (Summer 1958), pp. 232–40; and André Abbou, "Note," *La Revue des lettres moderne* 3 (1970), pp. 301–2.

17 "Notes et variantes," *Théâtre, récits, nouvelles,* p. 1797.

18 Ibid.

19 *Serious Reflections during the Life and Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe,* part 3 (New York, 1903), p. xii.

20 "L'Eté," *Essais,* pp. 854–55.

21 In Victor Brombert's view, the allusion to the romantic *topos* is another example of Clamence's irony. *The Romantic Prison* (Princeton, N.J., 1978), pp. 173–74.

22 The ambiguities of chronology in Clamence's past and the problems raised by these have been well described by Terry Keefe in "Camus' 'La Chute': Some Outstanding Problems of Interpretation Concerning Clamence's Past," *Modern Language Review* 69, 3 (July 1974), pp. 541–55. There is more order between present-imaginary (past) spaces than in chronology (e.g., the account of the suicide while on the canals, the account of the boat event from a boat, and, especially, I think, the account of the chronologically problematical prison camp episode in Clamence's room in the ghetto). Thus it may be argued that the novel is structured spatially rather than temporally.

23 The "Little Ease" is described by William Harrison Ainsworth, nineteenth-century author of "historical romances," as follows: "The walls of the cell, which was called the Little Ease, were so low and so contrived, that the wretched inmate could neither stand, walk, sit, nor lie at full length within them." *The Tower of London* (New York: The Nottingham Society, 1840), p. 134.

24 *Théâtre, récits, nouvelles,* p. 2025.

4 A Literature of Encagement

1 "Existentialism: When they accuse themselves, you can be sure that it's in order to load the blame on others: judge-penitents." Camus, *Théâtre, Récits, Nouvelles* (November 1954), p. 2002.
2 *Les Temps modernes* 8, no. 82 (August 1952), p. 330.
3 Ibid., p. 345.
4 See the text of the film by Alexandre Astuc and Michel Contat, *Sartre* (Paris: Gallimard, 1977), p. 68. Contat cites Simone de Beauvoir's memoirs on Sartre's return from captivity and Sartre corroborates, "It is certain that the beginning of *engagement* dates from that time."
5 *Les Nouvelles littéraires* (1 February 1951), p. 1.
6 "La République du silence," in *Situations III* (Paris: Gallimard, 1949), p. 11.
7 It is also the subject of an entire book: Marie-Denise Boros, *Un Séquestré, l'homme Sartrien* (Paris: Nizet, 1968).
8 *Situations IX*, pp. 26–27.
9 *Saint Genet, comédien et martyre* (Paris: Gallimard, 1952), p. 536.
10 Georges Matoré, *L'Espace humaine* (Paris, 1962), pp. 138–52, analyzes the predominantly spatial quality of existentialist vocabulary.
11 "Sartre and the Drama of Ensnarement," in *Ideas in the Drama*, Selected Papers from the English Institute (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), pp. 155–74. See also Brombert's chapter on Sartre in *The Romantic Prison*.
12 "Qu'est-ce que la littérature?" in *Situations II*, p. 313.
13 "Pour un théâtre de situations," in *Sartre, un théâtre de situations*, ed. Contat and Rybalka (Paris, 1973), p. 20. Text originally published in *La Rue*, no. 12 (November 1947).
14 Ibid., p. 19.
15 Genvière Idt points out the metonymic function of the bedroom, extension of the body-prison, in *Le Mur de Jean-Paul Sartre* (Paris, 1972), p. 114.
16 See Michel Rybalka's *Notice* in Jean-Paul Sartre, *Oeuvres romanesques* (Paris, 1981), pp. 2012–16.
17 Simone de Beauvoir interprets Sartre's reasons in *La Force des choses* (Paris, 1969), p. 213 (cited in *Les Ecrits de Sartre*, pp. 219–21) and Sartre has made his own comments in three interviews between 1959 and 1961. See Gerald Prince, *Métaphysique et technique dans l'oeuvre romanesque de Sartre* (Geneva, 1968), p. 139. George Bauer and Michel Contat have painstakingly edited the available manuscripts of fragments of *La Dernière Chance* as well as various plans for the completion of the novel in the Pléiade *Oeuvres romanesques*, pp. 1585–1654, 2136–60. Contat summarizes the known reasons for Sartre's failure to complete *Les Chemins de la liberté* and adds his own speculations, based on unedited personal interviews, in *Oeuvres romanesques*, pp. 1877–82. The reasons appear to be basically four: as the postwar world grew more complex (notably with the appearance of the Soviet camps), Sartre became less interested in a novel set in the simpler ethical cli-

mate of the Resistance; Simone de Beauvoir already had written the novel of postwar Paris with *Les Mandarins;* Sartre did not want to be identified with Mathieu or to have his novel read as a *roman à clef;* and, finally (the least documented reason, but to my mind the most self-evident) it is much more difficult for any modern novelist, and especially for Sartre, to represent positive, or didactic, models of liberty (a Mathieu and a Brunet successful in the completion of their "roads") than negative or aspiring ones. This is indeed one of the reasons that leads Sartre to deal with liberty in terms of imprisonment and to end his published novel in the stalag.

18 *Oeuvres romanesques*, p. 1580.

19 Sartre uses this same metaphor, the sensation of being at sea on an anchorless ship, in a section of the journal entitled "La Mort dans l'âme" describing his regiment's temporary confinement in a Catholic school in a deserted town. *Oeuvres romanesques*, p. 1562.

20 Gerald Prince points out the role of this "cutter" in breaking through Brunet's armor. The German word also means "tailor" as does the Latin origin of Sartre's name, *sartor*. Michel Contat concludes that Schneider/Vicarios is a fantasized combination of Sartre himself and the "vicary" Nizan. *Oeuvres romanesques*, p. 2107.

21 *Action française* (13 April 1939), p. 5.

22 As John K. Simon shows in "Madness in Sartre: Sequestration and the Room," *Yale French Studies*, no. 30 (Fall–Winter 1962–63), p. 64. Sartre refers to the case obliquely in *Les Séquestrés d'Altona*, act 2, sc. 8.

23 See Sartre's press conference on the film of *Le Mur* in *Jeune Cinéma*, no. 25 (October 1967), cited by Idt, *Le Mur de Sartre*, p. 138.

24 Iouri Lotman, *La Structure du texte artistique* (Paris, 1973), analyzes this pattern as a common narrative structure.

25 "Eve tries to join Pierre in the closed, unreal world of madness. In vain; that world is only a show and madmen are liars." *Oeuvres romanesques*, p. 1807. Michael Issacharoff, in his spatial reading of "La Chambre" in *L'Espace et la nouvelle* (Paris: Corti, 1976), tends to follow Sartre's remarks in stressing the negative valorization of closed space (associated with *en-soi* and *mauvaise foi*). I see rather a profoundly ambiguous valorization of the cell-space.

26 See Simone de Beauvoir, *La Force de l'âge* (Paris, 1960), p. 568.

27 Interview by Paul-Louis Mignon, *L'Avant-Scène théâtre*, nos. 402–3 (1–15 May 1968), pp. 33–34.

28 In his study of the semiological function of theatrical space in *Huis clos*, Michael Issacharoff distinguishes three types of space: represented space (the decor on stage), spaces evoked by the characters, and the rest of hell. "L'Espace et le regard dans *Huis clos*," *Magazine littéraire*, nos. 103–4 (September 1975). My reading refines the imaginary spaces and sees their function differently. See also his "Sartre et les signes: La dynamique spatiale de *Huis clos*," *Travaux de linguistique et de littératur* 15, no. 2 (1977), pp. 293–303.

29 See in particular Jacques Truchet, "*Huis clos* et *L'Etat de siège:* Signes

avant-coureurs de l'anti-théâtre," in *Le Théâtre moderne depuis la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale* (Paris, 1967).

30 As in Michel Contat, *Explication des Séquestrés d'Altona de Jean-Paul Sartre*, Archives des Lettres Modernes 5, no. 89 (1968), pp. 1–19.

31 See the interview, "Deux heures avec Sartre," in *L'Express*, 17 September 1959, and "Vous êtes formidables" in *Situations V*. Sartre claims that he wanted to show Frenchmen how they sequestered themselves from the situation in Algeria. The main character's name, Frantz, certainly suggests the possibility of an allegorical interpretation along these lines.

32 Lucien Goldmann, "Problèmes philosophiques et poétiques dans le théâtre de Jean-Paul Sartre," in *Structures mentales et création culturelle* (Paris, 1970), p. 254. According to Goldmann, the party's policy of de-Stalinization, with its logical consequence that the atrocities of the Stalinist camps had been useless, put many Communists in the position of Frantz.

33 Pointed out by John K. Simon, "Madness in Sartre."

34 "Père et fils," *Livres de France* 17, no. 1 (January 1966), p. 19. Cited by Dorothy McCall, *The Theatre of Jean-Paul Sartre* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), p. 131. See also *L'Idiot de la famille* 1.

35 In his semiotic analysis of *Les Séquestrés*, Michael Issacharoff terms these "une diégèse mimétisée," distinguishing them from "l'espace mimétique" (onstage) and "l'espace diégétique" (referred to as offstage). "Sur les signes des *Séquestrés*," *Obliques*, nos. 18–19 (1979), pp. 141–47.

36 Michel Contat, *Explication des Séquestrés*, p. 25, curiously confuses Luther with Calvin in his erroneous application of Max Weber's thesis to this play. Luther's influence (for Weber as well as on the von Gerlachs here) is on a tortured morality rather than on a sense of capitalist vocation.

37 See Sartre's foreword to R. D. Laing and D. G. Cooper, *Reason and Violence, A Decade of Sartre's Philosophy 1950–1960* (New York, 1971), p. 6. "Like you, I think—I regard mental illness as the 'way out' that the free organism, in its total unity, invents in order to be able to live through an intolerable situation." In this light, one would have to regard Frantz's sequestration as his original "way out" and his suicide as the failure of that way upon his return to "sanity."

5 From Inside

1 *Saint Genet, Comédien et martyre* (Paris: Gallimard, 1952), p. 315.

2 Sartre's metaphor for Genet's prison-situation echoes one used by Simone de Beauvoir to describe the situation of "the second sex." Three types of women, the Narcissist, the Woman in Love, and the Mystic exemplify attempts "to realize transcendence in immanence" or the "effort . . . of imprisoned woman to transform her prison into a heaven of glory, her servitude into sovereign liberty." *The Second Sex*

(New York, 1952), p. 698. Again, "the woman who is shut up in immanence endeavors to hold man in that prison also: thus the prison will be confused with the world, and woman will no longer suffer from being confined there" (*The Second Sex*, p. 797), whereas the liberated woman attempts to escape from prison rather than putting man in it.

3 "L'issue qu'on invente dans les cas désespérés." *Saint Genet*, p. 536.

4 *Soledad Brother: The Prison Letters of George Jackson* (New York, 1970), p. 5. This passage is cited in a brief but significant essay by Reinhard Kuhn, "Jean Genet: Prisoner of Society," in *Fiction, Form, Experience* (Montreal, 1976), pp. 160–67. Kuhn argues strongly that imprisonment is *the* central influence on Genet's work: "In sum, the entire literary output of Genet grows out of and turns back on the cellular existence, and his may be called a criminal imagination in the literal sense of the word" (p. 162). He errs, in my opinion, when he proclaims that Genet "universalizes the prison experience and sees in it the common condition of mankind" (p. 162). Although it is true that the prison-world reflects certain aspects of our world (such as hierarchies of power), to live in prison is essentially to plunge into an antiworld where connecting threads with ours are lost. I hope to demonstrate that, unlike Malraux, Camus, and Sartre, Genet *cannot* see imprisonment as a symbol of the human condition.

5 According to his statement in an interview with Hubert Fichte, "I Allow Myself to Revolt," in *Genet: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1979), p. 186.

6 In *A Genetic Approach to Structures in the Work of Jean Genet*, Harvard Studies in Romance Languages no. 34 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978), chap. 2.

7 The play appears to have been completed in 1946, then published in 1947, 1949, and in a "definitive" version in 1965. See Maggie Megaw, "Jean Genet's *Haute Surveillance:* A Study of the Manuscripts," *Library Chronicle of the University of Texas at Austin*, no. 14 (1980), pp. 67–99.

8 In the early published editions of the play and, according to Megaw, in the first three manuscripts, Green-Eyes leaves the stage, presumably to visit with his wife. In the 1965 edition, he refuses to go.

9 Megaw points out a decisive change from realistic to abstract decor between the third and fourth manuscripts and the replacement of the word "prison" by the word "fortress" in the second manuscript. "*Haute Surveillance:* A Study of the Manuscripts," pp. 71–74.

10 As Harry E. Stewart has argued, there is reason to see LeFranc as the "hero" of this play precisely because he attains the state of solitude (as described for example in "L'Atelier d'Alberto Giacometti") so precious to Genet. "In Defense of LeFranc as a 'Hero' of *Haute Surveillance*," *French Review* 45, no. 2 (1971), pp. 368–69.

11 *Paris-Presse l'Intransigeant* (24 February 1949), cited by Philip Thody in *Jean Genet: A Study of His Novels and Plays* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1968), p. 162.

12 Genet, "Comment jouer *Les Bonnes*," *Oeuvres complètes* 4:269.

13 *Oeuvres complètes* 4:274, italics mine. From a director's point of view, the idea is, according to Roger Blin, "a difficult proposition and may still be a purely theoretical one." See Jeanette Laillou Savona, "Jean Genet Fifteen Years Later, An Interview with Roger Blin (Paris, 14 October 1980)," *Modern Drama* 24 (1981), pp. 127–34.
14 Y. Went-Daoust, "Objets et lieux dans *Le Balcon* de Jean Genet," *Obliques*, no. 2 (1972), pp. 23–36.
15 Michèle Piemme, "Scenic Space and Dramatic Illusion in *The Balcony*," in *Genet: A Collection of Critical Essays*, pp. 156–71.
16 "Profane and Sacred Reality in Jean Genet's Theatre," in *Genet: A Collection of Critical Essays*, p. 176.
17 Naish, *A Genetic Approach*, chap. 3.
18 Thody, *Jean Genet*, p. 81.
19 *La Littérature et le mal* (Paris, 1958), pp. 185–226.
20 Richard Coe, *The Vision of Jean Genet* (New York, 1968), p. 135.
21 "I Allow Myself to Revolt," p. 180.
22 Coe, *Vision of Jean Genet*, p. 304.
23 *Profane Play, Ritual and Jean Genet: A Study of His Drama* (University of Alabama, 1974), chap. 5.
24 *Soledad Brother*, introduction.
25 See *Gens de liberté*, ed. Jean-Paul Liégeois (Paris, 1978), pp. 73–84.

Epilogue

1 From an interview published in *Le Monde* (11 April 1983), translated and reprinted in the *Matchbox* (publication of Amnesty International), June 1983.
2 *Surveiller et punir*, p. 308.
3 Sue Halpern in the *Nation*. For an overview of the Abbott case, see Michiko Kakutani, "The Strange Case of the Writer and the Criminal," *New York Times Book Review* (20 September 1981).
4 *Quel beau dimanche!* (Paris: Grasset, 1980), p. 142.
5 "I am seeking something. Night is falling. I don't quite remember what it was. Was it really a prison?" *Topologie d'une cité fantôme* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1976), p. 12.

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